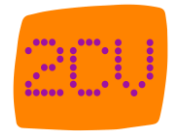


Value of Travel Time

What is really driving business travel decisions?

Qualitative Research Report
July 2015



A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

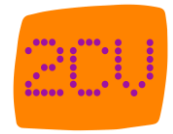
- Modern ways of working have evolved: the relationship between work and leisure is now blurred and the boundaries between home and work are more fluid
- Employees are often quite autonomous in the way that they manage their time; there is less focus on 'time spent' and more on 'tasks achieved'
- Briefcase travel occupies a unique space:
 - It often straddles both personal and professional worlds, making it hard to delineate between the two
- Travel has a very human element to it, often intrinsically linked to happiness and general wellbeing; yet it is also very much a logistical issue
- Travel time is no longer seen as 'dead' time; there is a general tendency to make the most of the time spent en route
- This means that minimizing travel time is not necessarily a priority, though it is still important for most businesses and travellers

Business focus on travel decisions

- Informal rules and organizational culture are often more important, and evident, than formal policies around travel
- The formal and informal facets come together as a 'company philosophy', the strictness of which depends on the culture of the company, its size and the 'visibility' of senior management
- In practice this means that employees are largely in control of how a business values time, and thus time savings
- It also means that social/company norms play as much of a role as formal policy in determining how people travel; observable behaviour is hugely important in this respect
- More junior employees are often more focused on cost when making travel decisions than senior personnel, in part due to their sense of responsibility to make the 'right' decision

The value of travel time

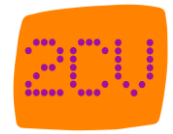
- While travel time is not wasted time, quicker journeys are always more desirable
- The more valuable time is perceived to be the more likely businesses are to respond positively to the idea of travel time saving.



- Perceptions of the value of time often relate to how time is accounted for within a business; many businesses (especially smaller ones) do not appear to have clear ideas of the monetary value of time (unless talked about in terms of salary or hourly rates to clients) so it can be hard to gauge

Travel time savings

- Time savings are of most benefit when they are tangible; this tangibility can be diminished when time saved seems unobservable or is too small to make an impact
- There is most scope for valuable time saving...
 - On long journeys, where a significant chunk of time might be cut
 - On short journeys, when a small cut would save a significant proportion of total journey time. Or for certain sectors where a small time saving can be easily transferred into greater productivity, e.g. sales, meaning employees could fit in extra trips and potentially boost sales
- Reliability is potentially more valuable than shorter journeys, largely because more reliable road/rail trips would lead to less need for time 'buffers' and, therefore, more time saved



B. BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

THE NEED FOR RESEARCH

The value of travel time savings (VTTS) is a hugely significant concept in the process of travel and transport appraisal. New projects are subject to a rigorous process whereby the combined benefits are monetised; travel time benefits are typically the most important of these benefits. The value of travel time also forms the basis for calculating the value of other time-related benefits such as reliability.

The Department for Transport's Transport Appraisal and Strategic Modelling (TASM) team is responsible for updating the value of travel time savings. In May 2014 the team commissioned the latest study on VTTS to review and update how this will inform decision-making. The study focuses on the value of travel time savings for both businesses and individuals; it explores how businesses benefit from reduced travel times, how much they would be willing to pay for reduced travel times, and what factors (including journey purpose, the employee's wage, the trip distance or duration, and the ability to use travel time productively) cause this value to vary.

Values of travel time savings for businesses are calculated based on the stated and revealed preferences of both employers and employees. The preliminary qualitative stage of the VTTS research (carried out by an independent contractor) found there was a disparity between the views of employers and employees:

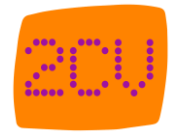
Employers participating in the research claimed:

- They would always look for efficiencies,
- Their priority was employee productivity.

In contrast, **employees** valued time savings for both personal and business benefits:

- Some were willing to buy time savings in order to enhance their personal lives,
- Not all were convinced that employers would pay for travel time savings simply to improve staff well-being.

Although understandable, these differing views raise the question of how data collected in the VTTS study, from interviews with employers and employees, should be interpreted. Consequently, the Department commissioned this additional qualitative study to build on the work of the VTTS study. These findings will seek to further support the interpretation of data collected in the VTTS study.



OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

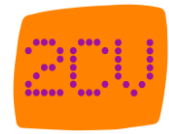
The overall objective of the research was to explicate the results of the existing VTTS work to help inform the DfT's response to, and interpretation of, responses from businesses. In essence, to answer the question:

What is really driving business decisions around travel and what does this mean for the VTTS findings?

Key research objectives were to understand...

- **How decisions about 'briefcase travel'¹ are taken within businesses**
 - How interaction and integration of employee, employer and the 'business' approaches/views work in practice;
 - The 'true' key influences in business travel decisions and the trade-offs made;
 - How the decision-making process differs depending on who is making the travel booking?
- **The extent to which travel-related attitudes and behaviours of employees are aligned with those of their employers**
 - How employers' attitudes and behaviours towards travel decision-making differ to those of their employees - the 'rules' vs. the reality;
 - How employers and employees view the relative benefits of quicker journey times?
- **The extent to which decisions taken about travel (concerning car and rail use) within businesses reflect the 'true' business view**
 - The levels of awareness of travel policies among employees;
 - How representative the views of senior decision-makers are of their business travel policy/rules;
 - The extent to which employers provide personal views vs. corporate views, when answering on behalf of their business.

¹ Briefcase travel can be defined as travel for business purposes, for example to meet clients, customers or suppliers, travelling between offices or to provide professional services. It includes journeys made by people who are travelling as part of their job, but who are not professional drivers



OUR RESEARCH APPROACH

To understand how travel decisions are made within businesses, we needed to gain a clear picture of what is going on in a selection of different businesses. We therefore conducted a series of **detailed case studies** of a range of different businesses, speaking to a selection of target respondents within each to get a **holistic view** of travel decisions within each organisation:

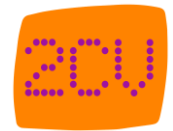
- How are travel decisions made in real life?
- What influences these travel decisions? What are the trade-offs that people are making?
- What is the 'official view' of the business and how does this work its way through to managers and staff when they come to making the actual travel decisions?

We spoke to a range of different types of respondents within each business, as outlined in the Sample section. These encompassed the full spectrum of staff, from those creating and informing the 'business view' (**policy makers**) through to those who sign off on or otherwise apply the formal policy (**policy enforcers, travel bookers**) through to the **travellers** themselves.

Respondents were asked to complete a relatively straightforward pre-task for up to 2 weeks prior to participating in the interview. These were a mixture of:

- In-the-moment travel capture: through diarising of any briefcase travel made
- Retrospective travel capture: looking back over the past few months' travel to consider specific instances of travel, and any points at which they made good or bad decisions
- An introduction to the company: a pen portrait of the business to gauge the context of travel decisions: how much time/money is overtly considered in most decisions etc.
- Scenario testing: how different people within the business take travel decisions
- Summary of the company's travel policy: what it is, how it is implemented, whether they know it at all

The interviews themselves took place at respondents' places of work and lasted up to an hour each. We started with the lead respondent, and arranged for the remaining interviews to take place on that same visit. On some occasions it was more appropriate to conduct the interviews as paired depths/ triads with the relevant members of staff. We also aimed to supplement our visit with informal mini-depths with other relevant staff who were available. Where it was not possible to speak to any of the remaining respondents on that day, we conducted the interviews at a later date, by telephone or Skype.



The interviews used a range of techniques to **deep-dive** into individual travel decisions, approaching the issue from a range of angles to thoroughly explore motivations and attitudes. Specifically, the interviews required respondents to keep travel diaries to get them thinking about the subject, before encouraging them to reflect upon the company and their own approach to travel in more detail, and from multiple perspectives.

In total, we spoke to 60 individuals across 24 organisations. The following table sets out the distribution of the sample across businesses in different locations, and of different sizes.

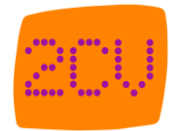
Primary variables	Subgroup	Interviews achieved (Organisations)	Interviews achieved (Individuals)
Region/Locations	London/Home counties	6	9
	North (East/West)	3	6
	Midlands	3	9
	Wales	4	10
	Scotland	4	12
	South West	5	14
Business size	Sole trader/Micro (<10)	5	13
	Small (<50)	6	15
	Medium (<250)	5	14
	Large (>250)	6	18



Interviews achieved (company and employee) across key sample variables:

	Business size	Sector	Type	Location of Interview
1	Sole Trader	Production - Arts	Glassware	Cardiff
2	Sole Trader	Professional / Support	Management Consultant	City of London
3	Micro (1-9 employees)	Retail	Car Sales	Bristol
4	Micro (1-9 employees)	Retail	Tyres and accessory sales	Nottingham
5	Micro (1-9 employees)	Recreation / Entertainment	Classic Car & Limo hire	Paisley
6	Micro (1-9 employees)	Services - Professional	Training company	Manchester
7	Small (10 - 49)	Manufacturing	Industrial glass production	Bristol
8	Small (10 - 49)	Research	Medical Research Agency	Hertfordshire
9	Small (10 - 49)	Property	Estate Agents	Manchester
10	Small (10 - 49)	Manufacturing	Industrial chemicals	Glasgow
11	Small (10 - 49)	Production	Exhibition company	Bristol
12	Small (10 - 49)	Sport	Non-Governmental Organisation	Swansea
13	Medium (50-249)	Property	Estate Agent	Bristol
14	Medium (50-249)	Arts & Entertainment	Exhibition centre	London
15	Medium (50-249)	Scientific	Medical Examination Company	Manchester
16	Medium (50-249)	Financial	Accountancy	Swansea
17	Medium (50-249)	Entertainment	Events company	Glasgow
18	Medium (50-249)	Construction	Construction & Glazing Company	Birmingham
19	Large (250+)	Health	Private Healthcare	Bristol
20	Large (250+)	Construction	Construction/Engineering	Nottingham
21	Large (250+)	Manufacturing	Steel Works	Cardiff
22	Large (250+)	Council	Education	London
23	Large (250+)	Veterinary	Nationwide Vet Practice	London
24	Large (250+)	Council - Health	Care Homes	Glasgow

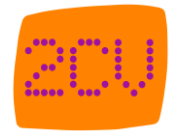
Within this sample profile, we spoke to a good cross-section of businesses, according to the following:



Organisation Variables	Respondent Variables
<p>Size of company (Key variable)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sole traders and micro businesses (<10 employees) ○ Small businesses (<50 employees) ○ Medium-sized businesses (<250 employees) ○ Large businesses (over 250 employees) <p>Industry /Sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mix of industries, covering Professional services, Construction/trade, Retail etc. <p>Approach to travel arrangements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 'Formal' (i.e. strict policies) vs. informal (less defined) ○ Booked using internal vs. external/agency staff <p>Region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scotland/England/Wales ○ Urban/suburban/rural <p>Role of travel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How critical travel is to core business (self-defined) ○ Frequency of travel <p>Travel type:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Management (i.e. meetings) vs. Operational (day-to-day on-site work; sales etc.) ○ Short vs. long journeys ○ Road vs. rail 	<p>Role in organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Policy Makers - People who set out the policy e.g. <i>Financial Directors; Head of Accounts</i> ○ Travel 'gatekeepers' - People who have responsibility for people's time and productivity e.g. <i>Managers; Supervisors</i> ○ Travel bookers - People who organise the travel e.g. <i>admin staff; external bookers</i> ○ Travellers - People who apply the policy, i.e. travelling staff ○ NB some people fell into more than one of these categories <p>Employee characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mix of gender and age ○ Length of time been working for company

Each of the criteria mentioned above were included as sampling variables to ensure as rounded a sample as possible. We wanted to ensure a mix in terms of the types of journey taken, the modes used and the types of 'home' and destination points, as we hypothesised that each of these might have an impact on travel decisions. For the same reasons, we also recommended a range in terms of region, industry/sector and whether the travel was mainly for management purposes (e.g. client meetings, new business meetings) or operational purposes (e.g. on site visits). Finally, we selected a greater number of businesses for whom travel was a major part of their work while still maintaining a strong sample of businesses for whom travel was more incidental.

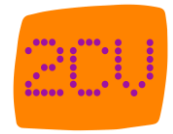
Recruitment proved relatively challenging, in that it relied upon first identifying relevant senior people within a business, then persuading them to not only allow us to conduct research with them and one or two of their colleagues, but also for all participants to fill in 'travel diaries.' This required a certain amount of persuasion and good feeling, along with the promise of a cash incentive which varied from £50 to £75. While smaller companies



were generally relatively straightforward to recruit, larger businesses could prove more resistant. We found that to complete the sample we needed to use the full complement of our recruitment resources, casting the net wide across our recruiter network and encouraging recruiters to use their own contacts; 'snowballing' on occasion; ensuring that the most senior contacts had bought in to ensure recruitment of more junior employees.

This proved highly effective, but it is worth noting that one of the barriers to recruitment appeared to be concern that 'head office' might not approve. For this reason, we aimed to focus on 'head office' within an organisation where possible. It seems plausible that an audience willing to participate in this kind of research may be slightly more 'flexible' in terms of overall approach, and possibly less reliant on strict internal policies. While we don't feel this has seriously affected the nature of the feedback, it is useful to bear this in mind when we discuss the adoption of policies within businesses.

Research took place between 10th and 27th March 2015.



B. SETTING THE SCENE – THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

In this section we explore some of the key issues at play within the work environment that influence briefcase travel. These help us to underpin our understanding of people's attitudes and behaviour with regard to this type of travel.

There are a number of important factors that need to be taken into account when exploring the priorities, attitudes and beliefs regarding briefcase travel decisions.

MODERN WORK BOUNDARIES ARE BLURRED

*"The introduction of Wi-Fi on the trains has made everything so much easier. I don't know how we survived before."
Senior Manager, Large Healthcare, Bristol*

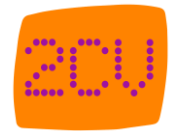
Much of the background literature around business travel suggests that the modern work environment is evolving beyond the 'traditional' concept of time equals money. The advent of mobile information and communications technology has meant that the boundaries between home and work have become more fluid.² People are able to conduct their work at home or when they are out and about, and this has led to a breaking down of the boundaries between the two worlds.

Working hours are often fluid and the more traditional 'clock on clock off' culture is less and less prevalent.³ Employees are often managing their own time and workloads, and the focus is more on *completing the tasks required* rather than the amount of time being spent. Overtime is often not claimed, perhaps not even a consideration, and late working hours become 'part of the job', rather than an exception.

The boundaries have become blurred, and this is particularly evident when briefcase travel is considered. Decisions about travel time are more complex now that we no longer have a

² Nippert-Eng, C. E., 1996. *Home and Work: Negotiating Boundaries Through Everyday Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

³ Centre for Transport & Society and Centre for Mobilities Research. 2007. *Travel Time Use in the Information Age: Report*. [online] UWE Bristol.



belief that time spent travelling is just 'dead time'. Several studies^{4 5} have demonstrated that far from being unproductive, travel time can represent a useful expenditure of time, and that this needs to be taken into account. As identified in these reports, and in our research here, briefcase travellers are liable to travel either before or after working hours, they can work as they travel, and they can absorb multiple forms of entertainment as they travel. Minimizing travel time is no longer necessarily the main priority.

Respondents, whilst rarely discussing this subject explicitly, consistently back this up in both the way they talk about work and, perhaps more demonstratively, in their implicit acceptance of working in what might be considered 'their time'. While the impact on personal life is frequently acknowledged (and is discussed to a greater extent later on) this is often viewed as something to be managed, rather than an issue to be addressed. The assumption is typically that one does what one needs to do to get the job done.

TRAVEL HAS A UNIQUE PLACE IN WORK TIME

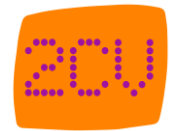
Briefcase travel is ostensibly a straightforward administrative / logistical task – how to get a 'unit of manpower' from A to B, in the minimum amount of time. However, the fact that the 'unit' in question is a person means there is a fundamentally human element to the decision, with the impact of those decisions being felt at an individual level. It is far less common to fully delegate travel arrangements as it is other admin tasks, because it has a personal impact: people like to evaluate the options themselves because of this.

This can be seen in the way most people tend to maintain control over how and when they travel (along with their accommodation if required). It is far less common to delegate travel arrangements in the way other admin tasks are handled, because it has such a personal impact: people like to evaluate the options themselves and work out what is best for them. Where it is delegated, travellers will either leave it to a trusted assistant (particularly at the most senior levels, PAs etc. have a very clear idea of their charges' personal preferences) or have a clearly defined set of parameters to follow ("*Roger will always travel first class if he has to go during the peak*").

The blurring of the dividing lines between work and home exacerbates this issue. The more fluid delimitation of what are 'working hours' means that decisions are made within a more complex environment rather than existing as a very rational decision based on the effectiveness of getting between two points. Briefcase travel is not simply getting a unit

⁴ Mohktarian, PL., Chen, C. 2004: TTB or not TTB, that is the question: a review and analysis of the empirical literature on travel time (and money) budgets. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 38(9), pp. 643-675

⁵ Kenyon, S., Lyons, G. 2007. Introducing multitasking to the study of travel and ICT: Examining its extent and assessing its potential. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*. 41(2). pp 161-175



from A to B, but is instead about helping a professional meet a sales target and still be home in time to read his daughter a bedtime story.

This intersection of the administrative and the human, the personal and the professional lie at the heart of this issue. The resulting decisions therefore involve a complex interplay between rational and emotional factors, with no hard and fast rule for which dominates in any given situation.

“I find the work-life balance hard to keep. Travelling a lot for my job means often getting home late and I sometimes take work home with me which makes it hard to keep them separate.”

Middle Manager, Large Engineering, Nottingham

THE HUMAN IMPACT OF TRAVEL IS AN IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION FOR BUSINESS

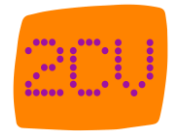
This unique space in which briefcase travel exists means that the **human cost of travel cannot be underestimated**. As well as providing a link and/or separation between people’s work and home lives it can have a huge impact on wellbeing and stress, especially when it takes up a significant amount of time which then bridges into their personal time.

For one respondent – a sole trader, producing jewellery and sculptures – there was very little distinction between work and personal time. She was visibly exhausted from putting in additional hours at her workplace, and then having to leave early to travel across the country to craft markets. For her, travel time – certainly in the morning – had blurred into the most fundamental of personal time: catching up on sleep. She was suffering as a result of this, at one point, missing out on one of the most important days in her annual calendar, a trade fair and key opportunity to make big sales - because she was so tired that she over-slept and missed the trip.

“I over-slept and missed out on the Friday before Christmas – the main day for the craft market. The Christmas market is where I make most of my sales – it’s where I make most of my money and what keeps me going the rest of the year.”

Sole Trader, Jewellery, Wales

Other sole traders and micro businesses had similar tales of juggling the personal and the professional, be it making it home for school runs or simply being around to have some kind of contact with their families. Certainly, there does seem to be a greater potential amongst sole traders for work and personal lives to be blurred, and to a greater extent, as they are so interlinked. Their time can be spent on their business or used as free time; it is entirely their decision and they have no-one else to answer to.



Other respondents across the sample, regardless of size or sector, also reported having difficulty keeping their work and personal lives separate. For some this was clearly an ongoing conflict, and one which was unlikely to be resolved any time soon; for others it was discussed in a tone of acceptance, or at least resignation. Travel, even if enjoyed, was often clearly seen as a burden by most in the sample; even the most positive of travellers acknowledged that sometimes they enjoy a break from it.

There was some indication that greater responsibility makes it more likely that this will be an issue, with more senior people seeming to be more likely to report this. That said, some gave the impression that greater seniority also gave people a little more leeway to find space for family life during work time, even if it was leaving home slightly later than normal, or heading home for family engagements. This was most evident among those who were on the road a great deal, or those who travelled long distances, especially if it involved a loss of personal time on top of work time.

The flip-side to this is that while they are conscious that they sometimes have to take work home or work long hours, this can be traded off against their company having a flexible attitude to appointments in work hours, or 'taking time back' if they have the opportunity.

"I work very long hours, so I need to make sure I make the most of my time when I'm travelling. If I'm not working on the train then I'll have to be doing that work at home when I'd rather be with my kids."

Senior manager, Large Professional Services, London

"My wife nags me when I'm not getting back till midnight and leaving the next day at 6. She thinks it's not healthy."

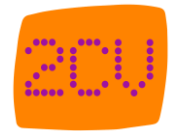
Manager, Small Glazing Firm, Bristol

This greater blurring of work and personal lives means that travel time can also potentially have a variety of **personal benefits**. It can be an opportunity for leisure time, especially with the growth in mobile technology – catching up with friends on social media, watching television programmes or films, listening to the radio or music, reading the paper, browsing the internet.

"Don't tell the boss, but I love getting on the train, getting a big cup of coffee, reading the paper and having a snooze."

Middle manager, Medium Sales, Bristol

It is worth bearing in mind that some people really enjoy travelling, especially long distances, as it allows them to see more of the country. It can also be liberating and enjoyable to get out of the office, a change to the daily routine. Some will specifically prefer



a certain mode; others like the prospect of travelling itself regardless of how they do it. This is clearly particularly true for those who rarely travel beyond their immediate environs. Those heading off on one-off trips, such as conferences or training sessions, are liable to treat it as something of a 'jolly', especially if there is a small group of travellers. It is notable that travel rules are often far stricter for these types of traveller, with most arrangements taken out of their hands.

"I really don't mind travelling to London. I always make the most of the day – do a bit of shopping, have a nice meal. It's a bit like day out for me."

Middle Manager, Small Sports, Swansea

"We get to see a lot of the country in this job. It's interesting to travel places that you otherwise would never visit."

Employee, Small Events, Edinburgh

Some, especially drivers, love being on the road; they enjoy the driving itself. This is perhaps even more so now that the car – for many – is an extension of their home environment, with greater comfort and possibilities for leisure.

"My number 2, he will quite happily head off and deliver or pick up a car from Edinburgh or Newcastle. He loves it. He's young, you see."

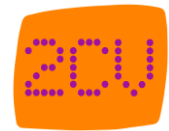
Owner, Small Car Dealership, Bristol

DIFFERENT WAYS OF WORKING MEAN DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF PRODUCTIVITY

As work and personal lives start to become more integrated and the work-life balance involves compromise on both sides, it is harder for businesses to definitively identify when time is 'theirs' and when it belongs to their employee.

This shift also puts employee wellbeing at the heart of business decisions: employers are relying on their employees maintaining this balance so they have a vested interest in ensuring their employees' wellbeing. This takes us beyond the clichéd idea of productivity, a one-way relationship in which the employer aims to extract as much value from the employee as possible. In this new paradigm, how employees feel is fundamental to how productive they are.

When it comes to travel, the wellbeing element is heightened due to the human costs of travel. Most senior personnel understand that travel can take it out of their employees and they will often try and make sure their employees are in the best state possible to conduct the job in hand. This is a relatively hard-nosed approach (after all a rested, happy employee is more likely to be successful than a tired, stressed employee) but it is fuelled by an innate



sense of care and, indeed empathy (it should never be forgotten that senior staff are often hardened briefcase travellers themselves).

“If it’s more than a couple of hours away and it’s a morning meeting, I’ll always tell them to go up the night before, get themselves a hotel, a nice meal and couple of pints. It’s worth the extra cost to know they’re going to be on form the next day.”

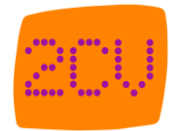
Employer, Large Health Care, Bristol

There was a general acceptance that if an employee has had to travel / work during their own time, then they would usually make an allowance for them to have at least some of that time back in some way, whether through TOIL (time off in lieu), or perhaps coming in to the office later the next morning.

What is particularly interesting about this is that it means that employees and senior decision-makers actually approach the issue with similar agendas: wellbeing and being in the right frame of mind are critical, and worth spending a little money on. Employees probably have less of an idea that a) senior decision-makers have this in mind and b) that they are willing to spend money on looking after employee needs.

As mentioned previously, travel time operates in a unique space in that it is slightly in ‘limbo’ – it is not possible to guarantee that the traveller will be able to get on with some work and use the time fully, but nor can it be viewed purely as ‘free time off’. Certainly, expectations do vary according to the characteristics of the journey:

- The mode of transport is a key determinant. If the employee is driving, then the time is written off from a work perspective, apart from perhaps being an opportunity to make some calls
- Rail travel provides the potential to get work done, but this cannot always be guaranteed unless they pay more money to travel first class and thus ensure they will have a suitable environment for work.
- The ability to do work when travelling by train is also influenced by the length of each journey leg. Depending on the nature of the work, it can be disruptive to keep having to change workspace, and settling in at each journey leg will eat up time. Having a limited amount of time in one place might restrict what tasks are practicable, and a number of changes will make the journey itself more tiring.
- The time of the journey is also crucial. Being in work time increases the expectation that the traveller will work on the journey – it is then at least notionally ‘work time’ and the traveller would need to justify why they are not working, rather than if they are travelling out of work hours, when any work completed would act as ‘credit’ in favour of the employee.
- Travelling to an appointment brings with it additional expectation that the time will be spent preparing for the meeting, even if it is out of work hours.



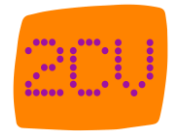
- Employees are expected to attend a meeting well prepared, and if for example, they had not been able to do this the previous day in work hours, then if there was a clear opportunity to prepare on the journey to the appointment – even if out of work hours – then there would be an expectation to do so.
- There is greater flexibility in travelling back from an appointment, even in work time, as there is an element of a task having been completed and more potential justification for a slight lull to ‘recover’ mentally.
- The traveller’s job role will also impact on what they are expected to do. Some people will not be able to get on with any work when away from the office as they might need access to special systems, or simply they are not provided with company lap-tops or phones to enable this. It will also be affected by the nature of their job and whether they are often out of the office. Infrequent travellers may well not be set up to work away from the office, whereas for a roving area manager, travelling is all part of the role and they will need to work with this to make sure they do their job effectively.

Participants reported using their journey time in a variety of ways. When taking it as personal time, they are likely to relax by reading the newspaper, listening to music, surfing the internet, or sleeping. When using it for work, they would typically use it to prepare for the meeting they are attending, or to perform work that is more amenable to interruption – perhaps catching up with emails or simpler administrative tasks; using the time to plan their day/ week ahead; or to provide thinking time. It can also be an opportunity to make phone calls, but this is more something they might do in the car rather than on the train, as it can be difficult/ awkward to have detailed conversations in a train carriage, and there may also be problems with getting a signal.

PEOPLE HAVE A FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO USING TRAVEL TIME

A further outcome of this more fluid approach to work and the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life is that people do not think of travel time in terms of whether it is purely a benefit or an inconvenience. It is not simply about – as it might have been in the past – travel time being an obstacle, an effort that needs to be minimised. Nor though, is it often seen as a positive; it is usually simply accepted as a means to an end.

Instead of avoiding it, people attempt to make the most of travel in the best way they know how. During work time, this is typically by doing their work - often simpler admin tasks or time consuming jobs that require focus. Travelling can be a good opportunity to avoid some of the interruptions and conflicting priorities of being in the office, to allow people to get on with a specific task, whether it be writing a report or preparing for the meeting they are travelling to.



There is a common aim to use the time well. In many ways, it is seen as being 'free' time – not something that can be 'officially' classed as fully work time, and thus an opportunity to get ahead on a task or to catch up on some of the admin that has been pushed out by more pressing matters. The traveller has more scope to use this time how they want to, whether for work or personal benefit.

"You don't know for certain whether you are going to be able to get a lot of work done, but you try to catch up on things, do some emails, just get ahead of yourself."

Employer, Large Professional Services, London

"Travelling by car gives you freedom. You can't get any work done whilst you're driving so it's a chance to switch off and listen to the radio."

Manager, Large Construction, Nottingham

Obviously, using time productively is very much a subjective matter; for some people this might involve preparing for the upcoming destination; for others it might be taking some time for themselves to read a book or simply relax. Employers and travellers probably have slightly different outlooks in this regard: there is something of an assumption among more senior personnel that staff would be doing something work-related on work time. However, this is by no means a given, and very few employers expressed any kind of desire to 'control' what their staff do on such journeys. Indeed, some employers may even encourage non-work activity: one company we spoke to expressly forbid their staff from picking up any calls while driving, thus limiting the work productivity of travelling staff.

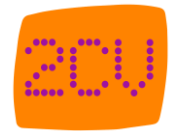
PEOPLE ARE TRAVELLING FURTHER FOR BUSINESS

Better travel infrastructure, online marketing and the recent recession has meant that a number of companies are travelling more and further than before to help their business. Although they have to be used selectively, longer journeys can sometimes be the only way they can access important markets and achieve their company's objectives; in some circumstances it is only through taking these longer trips that some companies survived the economic downturn. While it might seem logical to assume that improved technology leads to less need to travel – and it is clear that there are far more options to communicate remotely now - the reality is that for some businesses nothing replaces the 'human' touch, and that face to face contact is essential.

"If there's a big trade fair I'll travel up to York. It's a chance to make new contacts and hopefully get a commission for a sculpture."

Sole trader, Jewelry Business, Wales

Several of the small to medium companies directly attributed their increased range of travel to the recession. These companies often, though not always, had a more 'manual' or



manufacturing element of their work. The implication was that previously they had a very specific catchment area but that they increased this by necessity; to a certain extent this had happened intentionally but quite naturally, so they seemed almost surprised in retrospect at how far their reach now stretched. A few thought this was taking place to a sometimes extreme extent: travelling a couple of hundred miles to compete with businesses who were similarly conducting work in their own home territory.

“In 2009 things weren’t looking good, business was hard to come by. We started going further and further up the M4, just to keep things going...the guys know how grateful I am that they stuck with me through late nights and long days to keep the business in the black.”

Manager, Small Glazer, Bristol

To back this up, when discussing the potential benefits of faster travel in the trade-off exercises, one of the main benefits for many was to increase the potential range of their client base. As one respondent from a professional services firm in Swansea mentioned:

“If we could knock some time off the journey it would make it worth our while to travel a bit further. We currently tend not to go much beyond Cardiff, but a faster journey would mean we could expand over to Bristol.”

Middle Manager, Medium Accountants, Wales

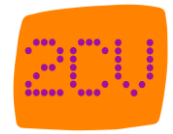
PEOPLE WANT TO SAVE TIME NO MATTER WHAT

The desire to save time should never be underestimated, no matter how much the nature of travel has changed over the years. Irrespective of the fact that people can now achieve much more while travelling, and that it can directly lead to a larger client base, few – if any – travelers would turn down the opportunity for quicker trips. **Travel time savings are always desirable.**

Conclusions

Travel time is just as likely to be ‘my time’ as it is business time, so its value is based on both company and personal needs

As we have seen, the working environment has evolved, blurring the clear relationship between work and leisure. The advent of mobile information and communications technology has meant the boundaries between home and work have become more fluid, employees are often managing their own time and workloads, and the focus is more on completing the tasks required wherever and whenever appropriate, rather than the amount of time being spent.



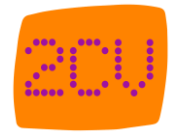
Briefcase travel occupies a unique position within this, often straddling the two worlds, neither fully work nor personal time, and decisions about travel time are more complex now that we no longer have a belief that time spent travelling is just 'dead time'. Briefcase travellers are liable to travel either before or after working hours, they can work as they travel, and/or they can absorb multiple forms of entertainment. Minimizing travel time is no longer necessarily the main priority.

This unique space in which briefcase travel exists means that the human cost of travel cannot be underestimated. As well as providing a link and/or separation between people's work and home lives, it can have a huge impact on wellbeing and stress, especially when it takes up a significant amount of time which then bridges into their personal time.

People tend to have a flexible approach to using travel time, although there is a common aim to use the time well. In many ways, it is seen as being 'free' time – not something that can be 'officially' classed as fully work time, and thus an opportunity to get ahead on a task or to catch up on some of the admin that has been pushed out by more pressing matters. There is also the potential to use it for their own personal benefit because travel and work sometimes occur in personal time.

However, employees tend to view travel decisions as being a responsibility. In a very practical sense it is a demonstration of how they are using the company's money and resources (their time). They therefore need to be able to justify their decision and not be seen to be 'taking advantage' of being away from the office.

Finally, better travel infrastructure, online marketing and the recent recession has meant that a number of companies **are travelling more and further** than before to help their business. Some see faster travel as adding potential to travel even further, rather than reducing the overall amount of time spent travelling.



C. IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAVEL POLICY

In this section, we explore how companies establish their approach towards travel decisions, including the use of travel policies. We then go on to explore how travel decisions are made within companies and how different staff interact with the formal and informal rules in this area

TRAVEL POLICIES ONLY PARTIALLY DICTATE BUSINESS TRAVEL BEHAVIOUR

The 'Company philosophy' is a combination of the formal and informal elements of company culture and rules. It is important to distinguish between the two, as this highlights a key aspect of the difference between employees and employers.

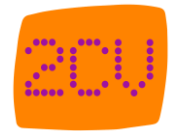
Formal Rules – policy, processes and protocols are not necessarily followed

The **formal rules** are, at their most obvious, the company policies which dictate travel behaviour and, related to this, how time and money are to be used. While many companies do have travel policies, it is unclear how rigorously these are adopted and followed.

Those companies most likely to have a travel policy in place were at the larger end of the spectrum; certainly all those classified as 'Large' (250+ employees), alongside most at the top end of 'Medium' (i.e. somewhere around 150-250 employees) were known to have a clear policy laid out. Aside from size, we found that in industries where legal or security risks are greater (e.g. construction companies with a strict approach to health and safety), travel policies take the greater priority. Other factors informing the likelihood of actually having a policy were industry (more professional services in this sample had policies than those in other sectors) and the prevalence/salience of travel to the organisation (i.e. the more integral travel is to a company, the more likely they are to have a formal policy).

Of course, simply having a travel policy does not necessarily mean that it is followed or applied. At a basic level, people need to know whether a policy exists and what it is before they can follow it. Many individuals, even among more senior personnel, were aware that their company had a travel policy, but were not aware precisely what it was. It tended to be something that was included in an employee handbook or induction process, but many respondents claimed not to have referred to it since they had joined the company. Respondents, especially employees in more junior roles, believed policies to be stored away somewhere 'on system', or 'on the intranet', but were often unsure precisely where.

Part of this lack of focus on travel policies appears to be because they are often regarded as being of less importance than other policies a company may have, for example, holiday or health. The reasons for this were hard to articulate for most but it seems likely that it is



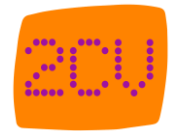
down to the fact that how people travel for business is not usually a fundamental part of the employment contract. When it is, this is in the rare instances when people are given fuel allowances or company cars, essentially turning it into a financial agreement rather than a policy.

Further to this, individual travel decisions are unlikely to have a major impact on the operation of the business unless they are conducted extremely frequently or emulated by large numbers of staff. While most agreed that companies need to be consistent in how they allow their staff to travel, this was mainly to avoid people of a similar level being treated differently, rather than ensuring a consistent approach across the entire business. There is an obvious need to keep costs down, but as a rule most senior personnel have a fairly good understanding of the impact of 'bending' the rules occasionally and are happy to do so as long as there is good cause. This does not mean that managers always understand what total travel costs are, but they will have a good idea about whether or not they are exceeding the organisation's predictions or finances.

Travel decisions are also open to myriad variables, which might make a detailed, strict policy, difficult to adhere to (and possibly even to write). They tend to be regarded – aside from a few broad principles – as being an application of 'common sense', rather than something that needs to be spelt out in great detail.

Given the low familiarity with the specific details of policies, it was difficult for many respondents regardless of seniority to describe precisely what they cover. Policies tend to focus on key principles, such as:

- who has a company car (e.g. sales-related staff were more likely to be provided with a company car)
- what class of travel people should use if using public transport (largely focusing on use of standard class travel)
- mileage rates refunded if staff use their own vehicles (one estate agent issued its staff with a generous fuel allowance rather than mileage rate)
- safety when driving (staff in a large engineering company were more aware of this than the rest of the travel policy; they were able to provide us with a booklet entitled '*Management of Occupational Road Risk*'. **This was the only full travel policy we obtained**)
- journey length and accommodation (e.g. one company recommended staff seek hotel accommodation if travelling for more than 2 hours)
- Use of a pool car (e.g. a large private health company aimed for any groups of 2 or more to use the pool service where possible)



Few respondents at any level seem to be aware of many substantial changes to their travel policies over time, other than a greater emphasis (in some companies) on keeping costs down as a result of more difficult economic conditions. For example, one professional services firm in Wales had recently introduced a new, much lower, mileage rate for their trainee staff attending training courses. As the company already paid for the course itself this had been repositioned as a 'contribution' to their travel expenses rather than as paying for their travel. Yet given that some companies appear to be travelling further than they were pre-recession, it is hard to estimate what the overall impact on the value of travel might be overall.

Policies are most likely to be followed to the letter in larger organisations where the setting and monitoring of travel decision-making is centralised, and the people signing off travel decisions themselves are less 'visible'. One large construction company in the sample had been bought out by a large overseas corporation. All company-wide policies, including travel, were passed down from the head-office overseas and enforced at local offices.

“Things used to be a little more flexible around here, but after we were bought out by the Spanish company things have been more formal. The HR department are in Spain and everything needs to be sent back there, it's all very black and white on travel, if you don't follow the procedures they might challenge you on it.”

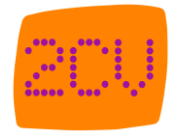
Senior Manager, Large Construction, Wales

Smaller companies and those where people tend to work more closely with the decision makers, and can discuss things with them in person, seem likely to have a more flexible approach and staff seem more likely to feel that they had a certain amount of freedom.

However, it is worth noting that the majority of businesses taking part in this study tended towards the 'flexible' approach rather than stringent enforcement of policies. Those businesses which seemed more formal were typically larger and more overtly hierarchical. A general trend appeared to be that employees had less day to day contact with senior decision-makers who were either elsewhere (in the building, or in a separate building) or were even located in another country. We should consider the possibility that this may be a research effect: it is plausible to assume that it was easier for businesses with a less formal structure and ways of working to accommodate the demands of the research, which would mean that they are over-represented in this sample.

A number of larger businesses required team/group/line managers to sign off on travel – sometimes, the costs, sometimes the booking, sometimes simply the time out of the office travel - especially where travel for an individual was unusual. Again, this was often more formal but managers appeared to adhere to a loose set of rules rather than a hard and fast travel policy.

Informal rules – norms, habits and word of mouth are easier to observe and follow



While travel policy undeniably contributes to how people make travel decisions, it is clear that in many companies **informal rules** often seem as, if not more important than centralised policies. This is partly because these are essentially observable rules which are derived from company norms: they are thus played out in front of employees on a regular basis. The actions and attitudes of other colleagues are observed and emulated, as they are easier to interpret than a manual and are ostensibly accepted within the business.

The practical effects of this are that a business' approach to travel is 'trickled down' and is as a result quite flexible and open to interpretation; perhaps more pertinently for this research, it means that it is hard to pin down as an influence on travel decisions. Understanding is not passed down but instead builds over time; it seems reasonable to assume that there will be different groups within an organisation who will thus have a different set of expectations because they are exposed to a different range of behaviours.

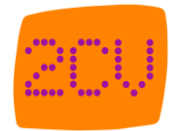
These company norms are apparent in every business included in the research; given that such norms are established relatively 'organically', they vary very much according to the environment in which they arise and are no doubt informed by myriad influences. While there may be industry/sector norms these are hard to identify within this sample. Instead, they are a loose product of the company, or even departmental, approach to work taking in both 'hard' factors (hierarchy; systems in place; formality of processes) and 'soft' factors (the overall atmosphere or 'feel' of the company; contact between junior and senior staff; level of autonomy granted to individuals).

Given that both hard and soft factors are often intertwined, respondents often only described the company philosophy in vague and relative terms. Thus accountants, engineers and medical professionals, used to more process-driven environments, would couch a more formal approach in terms of industry norms, yet would also refer to expectations from specific managers. Those with more autonomy, especially regular travellers such as middle managers and sales representatives, would often talk about their decisions being an inevitable consequence of the circumstances of their daily routine rather than referring directly to what others do.

"If the client says 'jump' tomorrow, I have to jump and get to Edinburgh, or Geneva or wherever. Sometimes that means crazy journeys at crazy prices."

Director, Medium Printing Firm, Bristol

In essence, these informal rules often seemed related to and/or borne out of any formal rules in place, making the concept of a company philosophy far more of a tangible influence than a formal company policy around travel.



APPLICATION OF COMPANY POLICIES CAN DEPEND ON ROLE AND SENIORITY

There are a range of factors that impact on travel decisions, and the way in which travel policies are interpreted and applied by the different levels / type of staff within the business.

Senior staff / Policy Makers

The most senior staff are those that set the company policies regarding travel. They tend to monitor the implementation of the policy at a top level, keeping an eye on the total expenditure on travel, and perhaps comparing travel costs year on year.

“I have a good idea of what the travel costs are each year and as a proportion of our turnover... as long as they stay around the same that’s fine.”

Senior Manager, Large Veterinary Group, London

Senior staff are often characterised by not being constrained by the policies that they implement. Their time is very valuable - in that they are important to the company, get paid the most and often are in a lot of demand. They are already working very long hours, and they need to ensure they can maximise the use of their time. Those in larger companies will therefore often travel first class by train when they need to, and would pay for a faster journey, as this allows them to work on the train; to get to their meeting faster and fresher; or to get back to see their family.

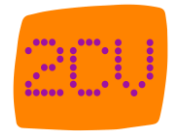
“My time is very valuable so when I travel I need to be able to work comfortably, make phone calls – I need to be in first class.”

Senior Manager, Large Healthcare, Bristol

Their staff are often not allowed to travel First class; this is often one of the few rules that people are aware of, along with approximate budget/ quality of hotel if they need to stay overnight. First class travel tends to be restricted to the most senior staff, unless there are sound business reasons for other staff to do this, for example if it is important for them to be able to get some work done whilst travelling, and it is worth paying the extra money to allow them to do this.

However, senior decision-makers do still feel they are keeping to the same principles that apply to everyone in the company: chiefly, what is the most ‘sensible’ decision i.e. what makes most sense for the business?⁶ Yet as they are important and their time is valuable they have pretty much free reign to make their travel time as convenient, efficient and/or comfortable as possible. This seemed to be common to senior staff / policy makers across

⁶ This is explored in more detail in the next section



the sample, and was borne out in their response to the stated preference exercises⁷ where they chose the faster, more expensive options, and backed by their response to the attitudinal statements⁸, where they believed the company would pay the higher travel costs to save time.

This is likely to partly (alongside cost differentials) explain why in previous quantitative research, policy makers are more likely to feel quite relaxed about their company's travel policy, and that they would be willing to pay extra for their employees to save time when travelling.

There is also the issue of what saving time actually means to people. For the company, if their staff can save time, there is then the potential for them to get more work done, to have more client meetings, and thus make more money. This then means the company can run more efficiently and be more profitable. It then becomes a straight evaluation of the increase in cost vs. the cost of the man-hours that this then saves the company.

However, wrapped into this is what actually happens to the time that has been saved? Does the company actually see the benefit of this? If an employee gets back to base slightly earlier, the increased flexibility in working practices means that it is not a foregone conclusion that they would come into the office and work. As one respondent put it:

"If they are coming back from a meeting and they get back into town at 4pm, is it worth their actually coming into the office? I don't think so. If it means they get back in at say 3.30pm, then yes, maybe they are more likely to get into the office and get some more work done."

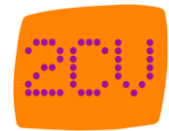
Middle Manager, Large Professional Services Firm, Wales

Even though the link between saving time and putting in more work is not always clear, within the overall balancing act that employees exist, it will at least count as 'saved time'

⁷ The stated preference exercise repeated a similar exercise conducted within the quantitative research. Respondents were presented with two travel options, associated costs and journey length. They were asked to identify which they would choose and why. Senior personnel were asked to consider this from both their own perspective and that of their staff (though they typically assumed that their staff would make similar decision to themselves).

⁸ The statement in question was again taken from the quantitative work and involved presenting the below statement and asking respondents to choose the statement that most accurately reflected their employer's stance. Employers were again asked to consider differences between their own response and that of employees. *Which of these statements most closely represents your company's position on paying higher travel costs in order to save travel time for you?*

- *My employer would pay if the benefits of the time saving exceeded the costs*
- *My employer would pay what may*
- *My employer would not be interested in buying a time saving for me on this journey*



which the employee can then decide to use as they see best. There is always the danger that the company does not see any benefit as the employee simply uses it as an opportunity to get home, and the nature of travel is that this is difficult to monitor. After all, the company is unlikely to know whether the car journey was actually very smooth and fast or that the train was not really running late. We explore this in greater detail in section E.

Managers

Middle management are the people who tend to apply and enforce the company policy on travel. They often speak directly with the policy makers, generally have accountability for the implementation of travel policies and might even have budget control over some aspects (e.g. the overall fleet fuel costs).

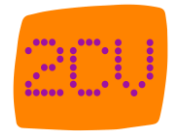
“We speak quite a lot about the best way of doing things. Like this morning, we’ve been trying to work out how best to drop this van off in Liverpool. I spoke to X about it and he said I should look into flights as well – by the time I’ve driven up there with a colleague in a separate van to drive us back that’s two people out of the office for the day – it might be cheaper just for me to get the plane back.”

Middle Manager, Large Veterinary Practice, London

There is an interesting issue around responsibility and accountability here. There does seem to be the potential for these middle-managers to be more strident in their communication of the travel policy than perhaps their senior managers would be. The middle managers have responsibility for the budget so get judged on their effectiveness in controlling this. They are also even more conscious than general staff that they are using the company’s money, so need to be responsible with it. There was some indication that this is more prevalent where the manager has greater responsibility for travel costs i.e. they are more central to the manager’s role, and where the manager is closer to the senior decision-maker.

While respondents did not provide specific examples of turning down requests, they made it clear that they would be willing to do this and that it had occurred before. More typically, they would discuss **the situations in which they might** turn down requests. For example, these might be when an employee had chosen to travel first class at peak time with no clear benefit to the company.

This may further help explain why employees often feel their company is less likely to pay additional money to save on travel time: the gate-keepers (middle managers) by the very nature of their role, are more likely to err on the side of caution – of spending less money on travel. The travel cost is a visible, direct cost, whilst the potential benefit of spending more to get somewhere faster would usually provide a benefit that is difficult to quantify. This might be a ‘soft’ benefit of greater employee morale, or being able to spend more time on



some work. Even if there is a tangible measure (e.g. being able to make an additional sales call), there is not always a clear link to a financial benefit for the company.

“They know that if they waste money on travel – go first class or stay in an expensive hotel, then they’re not going to get their money back.”

Middle Manager, Small Professional Services, Wales

“The area managers look after the travel budget for their staff and I keep an eye on the overall costs. They’re allowed to use their van for some personal travel but if they take the mickey then they have to pay for it.”

Senior Manager, Large Veterinary Firm, London

One area where there might be a clearer link is in sales, where there can be a clear link between the number of sales call made and conversions. One chain of estate agents had a clear idea of their conversion rate:

“We know that if we do say, 10 viewings, we will get a sale out of that. So if we can get to somewhere faster and save enough time to make another viewing, then we will be making more money for the business.”

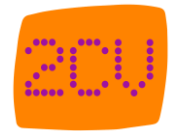
Employer, Small Estate Agent, Manchester

Across the sample, managers were more likely than junior staff to believe that the company would pay if the benefits of the time saving exceeded the costs and, in the stated preference exercises outlined earlier, would generally opt for the time saving. They believed this regardless of who was travelling: a rule of thumb appeared to be, put simply, that ‘time is money’; this was rarely a well-thought out response based on cost differentials or precise amount of time saved, but more of a ‘gut’ feel based on a need to keep people’s travel time to a minimum.

Travel Bookers

Similar to the middle managers, their role is usually to apply the company policy, in which case it is in their interests to tend towards caution rather than have to justify spending more on travel costs.

However, some travel bookers, certainly for senior managers, tend to have a more neutral relationship with travel costs. Their role can simply be to fact-find: to provide the senior manager with a number of different options and costs, and they will then take the decision. Typically, they would be told where their manager needs to get to and at what time and then would provide up to five or six different options for them to choose from, with associated costs. This means the manager can make their own decision about for example,



whether or not to travel a little earlier to get a cheaper fare, and whether to pay extra to travel first class.

Employees

Whilst they have an awareness that they are spending their company's money and have a responsibility for this, they are generally the furthest away from the travel policy and arguably more likely to want to maximise their personal benefit when making travel decisions. Employees tend to feel responsible at a general level to the company itself, but then more immediately to their managers to whom they will need to be able to justify their decision. There is also some feeling that they need to conform and are accountable to their colleagues – it could be embarrassing if they were found to be taking advantage of the company and behaving very differently to their peers. Thus social norms become established relatively easily, and organically.

Greater transparency and accountability encourages them to stay closer to the official policy and minimise costs, or at least be able to justify any increased spend. For example, in a professional services firm, travel costs are monitored against their customer accounts, and compared with previous years. In one firm of estate agents, their agents are given a mileage allowance to cover their travel costs; it is then entirely in their interests to minimise their expenditure to ensure they do not end up subsidising their work travel, or indeed, have the potential for them to make additional money from the allowance.

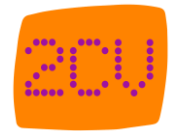
During the stated preference exercises, employees tended to think more closely about the potential benefit of spending the additional money to save time when travelling, feeling they would need to be able to justify that expenditure, and that there would be more occasions where it would not be in the company's best interests to pay higher travel costs for a faster journey. This included such examples as paying peak costs to travel faster, if the overall time saved was relatively minimal (e.g. 15 minutes) and the only benefit of this was minimising hassle/changes etc.

Conclusions

Employees have a great deal of control: over travel decisions, over use of their time and how they use travel time savings

The 'Company philosophy' regarding travel decisions is a combination of the formal and informal elements of company culture and rules:

- The formal rules are, at their most obvious, the company policies which dictate travel behaviour and, related to this, how time and money are to be used.



- Informal rules often seem as, if not more, important than centralised policies. The actions and attitudes of other colleagues are observed and emulated, as they are easier to interpret than a manual and are ostensibly accepted within the business.

The practical effect of this is that a business' approach to travel is 'trickled down'; understanding tends to build over time. While many companies do have travel policies, it is unclear how rigorously these are adopted and followed. Many, even among more senior personnel, were aware that their company had a travel policy, but were not aware precisely what it was. Given that travel occupies a unique space in work, this seemed to conflict with the prominence of policies in other areas (e.g. health and safety).

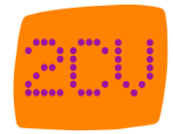
When making travel decisions:

- senior staff / policy makers: are the people who determine 'the business view', but on a day to day basis are perhaps more likely to be biased towards immediate work needs, providing solutions to immediate problems/ issues
- managers and travel bookers: are given responsibility and accountability for the implementation of and adherence to the travel policy, and thus tend to be biased towards ensuring the policy is followed and if in doubt, minimising direct costs
- employees: are more likely to be biased towards meeting their personal needs where possible, whilst being able to be seen to have made a reasonable decision. They are more conspicuously cost-conscious than more senior personnel, though possibly this is more indicative of their micro focus (as opposed to managers' macro focus).

When paying for time savings:

- senior staff (from senior managers up) seem more willing to pay more for time savings
- more junior managers and their staff are often more focused on cost and feel duty bound to weigh up one against the other

The tone or culture of the organisation is therefore initiated by senior staff / policy makers, but then influenced by the managers and travel bookers. Depending on the size of the business i.e. how visible and involved the senior staff are around the business, it is likely that they key determinant setting the tone for the business will be the gatekeepers, as they are more likely to be the direct points of contact that people have with the 'true' travel policy of the organisation.



D. THE AUTONOMY OF EMPLOYEES

In this section we take a closer look at how travellers make individual travel decisions: what are the factors that impact on the decision and how do they interact? We outline a model to explain these complex interactions.

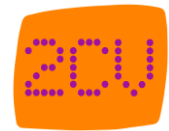
TRAVELLERS LIKE TO TAKE CONTROL OVER TRAVEL DECISIONS

Generally, companies tend to have a system whereby the individual staff make their own travel arrangements, and then line managers / unit heads tend to sign off travel expenses on a case by case basis. There was a wide range of payment options, ranging from companies paying centrally (typically only for the occasional ad hoc journey rather than regular travellers), company credit cards and personal cards which were reimbursed at a later date. While people paying with their own money tended to be slightly more cautious about spending too much, there seemed to be few differences between the expense processes.

There will usually be a simple form to complete and the money is repaid retrospectively. There was some evidence of line managers/ unit heads claiming that they have not approved travel expenses when they felt they were too high or staff had not acted appropriately. People will tend to have an idea of what the approximate costs *should be* for travel and only investigate in more detail if the amount claimed appears to vary significantly from what they were expecting.

The overall costs are then monitored at a more senior level, together with the expenses of the line managers/ unit heads - typically by the Finance Director / CFO or MD/ another Director in smaller firms. For many companies, this monitoring is mostly about watching out for discrepancies – abnormally high costs coming through or guarding against an overall increase in expenditure on travel. Travel costs tend to be seen as a necessary outgoing and are not necessarily that high profile within their business decisions.

It is worth noting that respondents tended to conflate a variety of costs into ‘travel costs’, and were not always specifically talking about ‘transport costs’ when discussing travel as a whole. As mentioned elsewhere, many people focus on the holistic experience of travel, and – more specifically – on the ‘end goal’ rather than the means to achieving it. Thus despite interviews being regularly punctuated by reminders to focus on travel specifically, some respondents found it easy to stray away from this specificity, and could easily segue back into more generalised discussion.



As one would expect, organisations have a variety of different ways of making decisions regarding travel. However, most often, the individual traveller tends to make their own travel decisions and their own bookings, other than the most senior managers who will often ask one of their staff, perhaps their PA, to research their options for them to then make a decision and get their PA to book it.

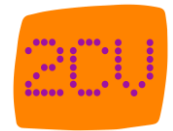
It is telling that feedback on the booking process for travelling is relatively minimal, despite asking all respondents to complete fairly detailed diaries. Those most likely to detail this more exhaustively are non-travelling 'bookers', PAs and Office Managers tasked with booking for more senior or (usually) more junior personnel. They have a more formal approach simply because they treat it in much the same way as many of their other duties.

For others, the booking process relies so much on 'common sense' or habit that it can be hard for them to break it down into sub-tasks; while they are aware of the constituent elements and the range of options at some level, they are less liable to break them down into discrete parts. All the heuristics that might normally come into play when making a decision: loss aversion, optimism bias etc. will inevitably inform what they do and make it very much an automatic, intuitive process.

Despite this, it is clear that the exact nature of the research and booking process varies depending on the journey itself. Where the journey is to an unfamiliar location, and one mode is not an obvious choice, then it is likely that people will compare modes, for example, car vs. train, at least to get an initial idea of the likely feasibility and cost, before investigating further to finalise the details. People are very aware of the impact of peak/off-peak travel and take the associated costs/ time into account almost as if they were spending their own money (though obviously safe in the knowledge that it is not coming from their account).

This tendency for individual responsibility (among regular travellers at least) can be superseded by a range of factors:

- where there are over-arching factors which create expectations as to how they will travel: most commonly, where they have their own vehicle provided by the company, or perhaps a fuel allowance, they are then expected to use this wherever possible
- where the journey is an organised event e.g. staff training, or for a centralised staff meeting, then someone else in the organisation might make the travel arrangements
- where the staff are travelling a lot and their appointments are managed centrally e.g. sales staff, then the central team are likely to make the travel booking



- senior staff are likely to ask one of their support team to scope out their travel options
- when the journeys are more complex, people are more likely to delegate this to a specialist member of staff/ more junior team member to investigate the travel options

TRAVELLER DECISIONS: A DECISION-MAKING FRAMEWORK

How people make a decision around business travel is intrinsically connected to the value that they place on travel time. Ultimately, travel time is just one aspect of the decision and there is a complex interplay of other factors, each of which contribute to perceptions of value and the overall decision.

These factors can be visualised as forming a decision-making 'lens', which splits the most important elements of the decision into the following broad categories:

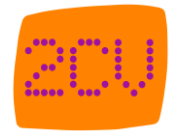
- **The work demands:** how the travel they are undertaking fits with their most pressing work needs in order to meet all their work demands
- **The contextual:** other factors relating to their personal and work lives which have an influence

The first of these, the '**work demands**' factors, are relatively straightforward in principle: they are the factors that are most important and relevant to **the business traveller** (as opposed to the business) at the point when they make their travelling decision. In most cases, these are a priority simply because they relate to the job at hand; for this reason they sit above any other factors as they are likely to supersede all other demands.

"At the end of the day, I've got to make that event, that wedding on time. It happens whether I'm there or not, so I've got to be there, with my camera, in the room. It doesn't matter whether that means a train at five in the morning or changing in Darlington."

Employee, Medium Event Filming Company, London

The **contextual** factors are a little more complex, as they comprise the broader background that informs their decision-making. As discussed already, travel is often an emotional, very human issue, despite the practical nature of getting from A to B, as it affects people's lives and travellers can have personal needs and desires which they aim to meet if at all possible. The extent to which this **personal perspective** dictates decision-making depends to a large degree on the strength of its counterpoint, the **company philosophy**. A company philosophy is dictated by not only the more formal elements that one might assume are



imposed by any business (policies, budgets, rules etc.) but also 'softer' concepts such as the informal company norms that are established and followed yet rarely articulated.

"Sometimes if I'm feeling good and it's a nice day I'll just go 'come on, let's make it a road trip'."

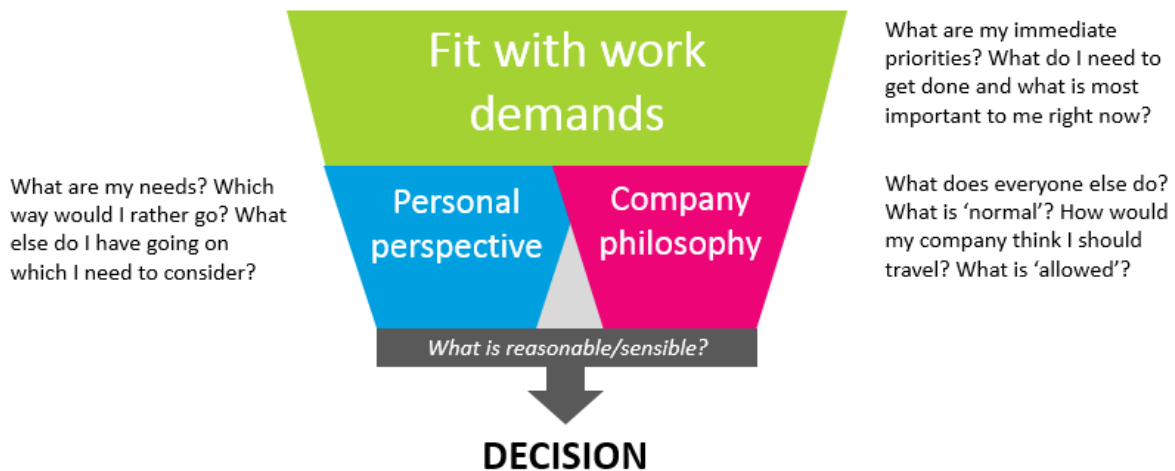
Employer, Small Vehicle Trader, Bristol

"Usually if it's under 2 hours we would drive, but if it's further we will look into trains."

Director, Small Tyre Sales, Nottingham

The extent to which the company overrules the individual, or vice versa, depends on a range of factors relating to the formality and hierarchy of a company, and the interaction between those elements of people's personal lives which are flexible and immovable. Where they meet, however, establishes a framework for **'common sense' decision-making**. This overlap between the personal and the corporate dictates the extent and elasticity of autonomous decision-making and defines people's ability to take responsibility for their travel. It is this tension that allows people to make a judgement call based on their own needs and what they know their company will accept; thus we find people making trade-offs between personal comfort and cost to the company or between convenience and stress.

The one group where there is more blurring within this model is for sole traders, where of course they 'are' the company, so the personal and the company perspectives are not necessarily quite so clearly delineated. However, for this group, the model still applies as there is still a tension between what they would personally like to do and – with their 'business hat' on – what their business needs. For example, there might be pressure to minimise travel costs at the expense of personal comfort and pleasure, because the business is going through a difficult patch.



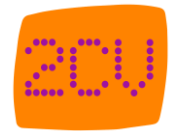
So, to whom, and in what circumstances, does this model apply? In short, we would argue that this model works in every situation (with no exceptions that we have come across) because it pulls apart the core elements that comprise this decision-making prism. Individual factors, such as time or cost, may well feature in more than one aspect of the model.

For example: in one sign-making company from Bristol, keeping costs down was very much an immediate priority for one of the middle managers we spoke to. While the core priority was, of course, to work with end clients to ensure delivery of a great product, margins were so low that cost was always on his mind. The practicalities of the office structure, with a minimum of 'briefcase travel' staff available, also meant that minimising time away from the office was crucial if the company's core business was to continue. Thus cost and time were inseparable from immediate priorities. At the same time, it was clear that he enjoyed spending time away from what was evidently a hectic office environment, and had his own preferences in terms of travel (always trains, even if cars might be faster). Looking back over previous trips he had taken, and comparing feedback from the company's MD, there was clear tension between his personal preferences and the company philosophy (which essentially involved a permanent dialogue over travel and logistics)

THE FRAMEWORK UNPACKED

a) Fit with work demands

This is the most influential of the three 'filters' due to the fact that it represents a unique combination of employee and employer needs. Any employee, regardless of how senior, has a good idea of what they need to do, when they need to do it and how they need to go about it. It is ultimately these demands that will dictate the range of options up for consideration in the first place.



These immediate concerns are informed by the following factors:

- **The end goal:** What they will be doing at their destination
- **Working en route:** What they need to do right now and what they'll be doing afterwards
- **Before and after the end goal**
- **Their role**

The End Goal

Given that briefcase travel is far more concerned with the reason for travel than the travel itself, it makes sense that this 'end goal' is of greatest concern when making travel decisions. Travellers tend to start from this goal and work backwards when making travel decisions. Thus they focus on a range of questions, each of which may well be dictated by, or dictate, the travel experience:

- Logistical issues: what time do I need to be there; how do I get there from station/car park? etc.
- The desired state/frame of mind: What state do I need to be in on arrival, mentally, physically, emotionally; what do I need to know when I'm there?
- Practicalities: what do I need to take and how does this affect the mode/time; what last minute thinking/discussion do I need to do?

This focus on the end goal can make people a little more relaxed on return journeys; employees often describe the idea of 'rewarding' themselves on the way home, perhaps by relaxing a little more or treating themselves to something from the drinks trolley.

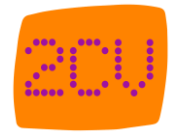
"We're professional business advisers, when we visit a client it's really important that we turn up well prepared and looking the part. I tend to travel by car as I know I'm not going to arrive looking dishevelled, and I always leave early to make sure I get there in plenty of time."

Manager, Medium Accountants, Wales

An individual's approach to this will ultimately depend on how their working day is structured: the more they are constantly travelling (e.g. from appointment to appointment, like estates agents, vets, surveyors), the more they focus on the overall 'shape' of their day rather than the individual appointments. This is still arguably a focus on the end goal, albeit the goal of meeting all appointments.

"If I know have to be in Croydon, Southgate and Sutton in a day, I'll work out the best way of fitting everything else in."

Employee, Small Surveyor, London



Working en route

Desirable though it might be for time to effectively stand still as people undertake business travel, the reality is that few business trips are isolated events, standing apart from other elements of people's working lives. Instead for most they are one element of a constantly shifting landscape of appointments, projects or strands of work all of which need to be coordinated and managed.

This means that many engaged in business travel are constantly trying to juggle the travel itself alongside doing the actual work for which they are employed. Travel decisions may thus be shaped by what work they feel they can conceivably achieve during the journey: be it reading a document, writing a report or responding to a backlog of emails. This is likely to change depending on how long the actual journey is, and the mode they take.

"If there's Wi-Fi I catch up on some emails, or I can write them on the train and send them when I get to the office."

Senior Manager, Large Veterinary Practice, London

Before and after

Related to the above, the demands of work before and after any journey are also important. At their most practical they can dictate where people need to start their journey from or where they need to head to subsequently. On a broader level, this may also have an impact on people's desire for comfort, space, peace or a swift return.

"I'm always really tired after a day in London, so sometimes I'll pay for an upgrade and get an earlier coach home."

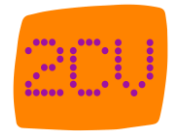
Sole Trader, Jewellery, Wales

"On a Saturday I have the day mapped out from the start; we've been filling in the diary all week so that I can get as many people to see as many properties as possible. At best I'll find a quiet 5 minutes to grab a sandwich I've made – I won't get a chance to buy anything for lunch, and I won't be eating at lunchtime."

Employee, Medium Estate Agent, Bristol

Role

Individual roles will inevitably dictate immediate work demands to some extent, especially in terms of how travel fits into their job and the extent to which a focus on time is associated with their role.



Those whose working lives revolve around travel, such as those in sales, are far more likely to have priorities set in stone that they need to incorporate into their decision-making. To a certain extent these are more likely to be habit than discrete decisions (e.g. using certain stations; taking certain routes). Those who travel infrequently are less likely to have immediate priorities: in some cases they will be people whose work is less set up for mobile working, so there will be limited impact on their decision-making.

“My nurses, they don’t have laptops so they can’t work when they’re travelling.”

Employer, Large Healthcare, Bristol

A role’s relationship with or focus on time also plays a part. The more personally accountable people are for the time they spend (e.g. through timesheets or appointment targets), the more likely they are to have a very clear focus on how they spend each hour of their working day. This cannot avoid affecting travel decisions, as this is often a significant use of time. Some professional services, such as accountancy and surveying, are charged out to clients on an hourly basis; it is notable that employees in these companies have a dichotomous relationship with time, focused very closely on it in terms of charging clients but also confident that however long they spend they can charge it back to those clients.

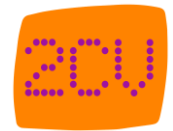
“We charge it all back to the clients. I’m pretty sure they’d rather be spending time on the survey than my travel.”

Employee, Small Surveyor, London

b) The personal perspective

Individual perspectives are, by nature, incredibly diverse and informed by an enormous range of factors. These can, at the most simplistic level, be summarised as relating to personal preferences, personal circumstances, individual attitudes and how they are feeling in the moment. To some extent these may well be governed by individual characteristics; it was difficult to get a clear steer on the impact of age/gender/lifestage due to the sheer variety of jobs and people we talked to. That said, a few broad trends were observable:

- Older people have a lower tolerance for lengthy trips (sometimes put down to less ability to cope with travel as one gets older; sometimes seemingly a result of simply having ‘had enough’ of travel)
- People with younger families or newer partners are more focused on getting back home to them
- Younger staff are assumed to be more able to travel (this seemed borne out by the small number of younger people in this sample)



Personal preferences

Most people have at least some preferences when it comes to travel, hardly surprising when the human aspect of travel is considered. These will cover everything from preferred mode and time of travel to which train operator, route or departure stations. Some of these will be very well argued and entirely rational (“I prefer the train because I get a chance to focus on the meeting at the other end rather than the journey itself”), others can seem counterintuitive from the outside (“I will not travel on South-Western, even if it’s faster”).

Regardless, these personal preferences will always play a part if people have an opportunity to exercise them. The sense of control gained by responding to these deep-rooted preferences can be enormously comforting when people are travelling when they would rather not be doing so (such as when they don’t feel like it, or when they think they have better things to be doing).

Personal circumstances

Again enormously varied, and again often highly influential. These circumstances could relate to such factors as where they live, other commitments they have (especially families) and other plans that people have made. While some of these may be flexible and can therefore be effectively ‘overruled’ by the demands of work (e.g. preferring to drive because one’s home is closer to the motorway than the station), for others these are ‘red lines’ and are thus a guide on the extent or nature of travel. This is most obvious for those with family commitments, such as dropping off or picking up children from school.

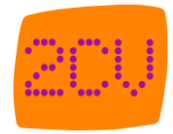
Individual attitudes

Most people have their own approach to work and to time-keeping; indeed some will have different approaches as part of their work persona than they do in their own time. Respondents often compared their own approach to travel to that of others, highlighting the differences in approach; these typically involved a comparison between those who liked to build in plenty of time to meet a specified appointment and those who liked to sail close to the wind and were often to be seen making a last minute dash for a train etc. Clearly such factors can be overpowered by the demands of work, but given that they are engrained habits people are still liable to fall back into these habits when they get an opportunity.

“He [middle manager] will drive anywhere, no matter how far. That’s fun for him. I don’t want that – I want to get back, see the kids, watch TV.”

Employer, Small Vehicle Trader, Bristol

In the moment feelings



How people feel in the moment of making a travel decision should not be ignored. While it may seem, on an intuitive level, less important than most other factors discussed so far, it can have a significant impact. This is most obvious when people are experiencing negative emotions, are stressed or tired; employees often admit to making ‘snap’ decisions based on relatively superficial reasons largely due to how they felt at that moment.

“After spending over an hour crossing the [Severn] Bridge, to get to the office this morning, quite frankly I don’t care how much my ticket to London costs”.

Employer, Large Healthcare, Bristol

c) Company philosophy

As we have detailed earlier, the ‘philosophy’ of the company is a combination of the formal and informal elements of company culture and rules.

The **formal rules** being the company policies which dictate travel behaviour and, related to this, how time and money are to be used, although they do not appear to be very rigorously adopted and followed.

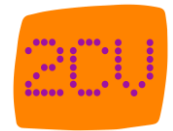
Informal rules often seem as, if not more important than centralised policies. The actions and attitudes of other colleagues are observed and emulated, as they are easy to interpret than a manual and are ostensibly accepted within the business.

The business’ approach to travel is thus ‘trickled down’ and is as a result quite flexible and open to interpretation. Understanding is not passed down but instead builds over time; and it is likely that different groups within an organisation will have a different set of expectations because they are exposed to a different range of behaviours.

The impact of this combination of formal and informal rules is critical, certainly far more so than any official policy. The reason for this is that company philosophy is essentially the real-life manifestation of any written or unwritten rules around travel.

As discussed previously, while few people are intimately acquainted with their company’s policy around travel, most know roughly what its expectations are. This will include both a broad understanding of expectations around cost and time, but also an observation of how it operates in real life. Numerous behavioural studies⁹ have shown that behaviour is far more likely to be learned through demonstration and replication, rather than through rote learning; this is as much the case when there are supposedly formal rules to follow as when

⁹ Social learning theory is the classic example of this: Bandura, a (1977), *Social Learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ



there are just broad guidelines – one has only to observe city traffic to watch how drivers conform to local ‘rules’ to see how this plays out.

Given that travel decisions have personal ramifications, and that many smaller companies don’t have formally laid out policies in the first place, company philosophy is clearly far more salient both on an individual level and to briefcase travellers as a whole.

This also explains how staff can pick up on more subtle trends – a move towards austerity; a focus on getting the job done regardless of travel costs – even if they are unspoken within an organisation.

Employers often believe the philosophy is more laissez-faire than it is

The informality of company protocols means that it is quite easy for there to be a disparity between employee and employer attitudes. Clearly much of this document concerns the gap between the two audiences, but it is worth looking specifically at different perceptions of the company philosophy.

Employers tend to describe themselves as relatively open-minded about travel decisions; in smaller organisations there is often an element of pride at the lack of a formal policy and employers are often swift to underline the egalitarian nature of their approach and the trust they place in their managers and employees. Senior personnel in larger organisations tend to focus on *how* the policies are implemented, with several pointing out that it is important to be sensible and give employees a certain amount of leeway.

In this sample, most claimed they would pay to save travel time ‘come what may’ (which replicates the response in previous quantitative research).

“I’m very relaxed about what they get up to.”

Employer, Small Signage, Bristol

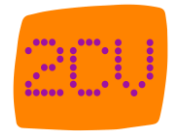
“You’ve got to trust your team.”

Employer, Medium Surveyor, London

“These guys know what they’re doing better than me.”

Employer, Small Event Filming, London

There is an assumption among employers that this attitude is translated to employees quite clearly. While this is arguably true (certainly many will praise a manager’s willingness to consider their needs) it leads to a somewhat more circumspect approach to decision-making among employees, who feel duty-bound to weigh up the relative pros and cons before making a decision. Again, this reflects previous findings suggesting that more employees think their employer ‘would pay if the benefits of the time saving exceeded the costs’.



This is not to say that there is a conflict between employees and employers, but it does highlight the fact that company philosophy is, to a certain extent at least, a subjective quality. This leads employees to feel compelled to make a 'common sense' decision, even if employers are more open to a less cost-focussed solution.

TRAVEL AS A RESPONSIBILITY

Employees tend to view travel decisions as being a responsibility. They are usually trusted to make travel decisions themselves, and the fact that they are travelling away from the office also means that many people feel they are more accountable for their time.

In a very practical sense it is a demonstration of how they are using the company's money and resources (their time). They therefore need to be able to justify their decision and not be seen to be 'taking advantage' of being away from the office. Travelling sensibly is wrapped up in people's approach to work and to 'doing the right thing'; this is evident in the way that people describe a 'common sense' approach to making travel decisions, and to making decisions as if they were spending their own money.

"Although I'm out of the office, I won't 'take the mick'. I make the best use of my time as I can."

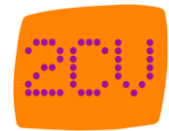
Employee, Medium Glaziers, Birmingham

This more obviously applies to those individuals who control their own travel purchase, though is still relevant to those travellers where these decisions are taken, or the purchasing itself is done, centrally. Central purchasing processes are relatively unusual and tend to be most common in organisations where travel is unusual for proportions of the workforce. In these circumstances there is a more formal process to booking, often going through one person who adheres to relatively strict guidelines in terms of costs, timings etc. Yet even here there appears to be a certain amount of latitude for 'common sense', to allow people to fit it in with other obligations.

THE FRAMEWORK AND KEY INFLUENCES ON TRAVEL DECISIONS

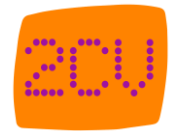
The framework outlined above can be used to explain how various elements of journeys are considered when making travel decisions:

- **Length of journey:**
 - *Fit with work demands:* This may be critical – the longer the journey, the more likely people are to want to work, relax or get themselves in the right state mentally for the final destination.
 - *Personal perspective:* Many had their own 'rules' around journey length, be it how long they would be willing to drive or what the cut-off might be



for deciding to stay overnight. Personal/family demands also play a part: some respondents with children, for example, needed to leave or arrive at specific times

- *Company philosophy:* These personal rules seemed likely to inform company philosophy, given that they quickly become a set of habits and thus a raft of observable precedents.
- **Mode:**
 - *Fit with work demands:* People have preconceived notions of what can and can't be achieved on rail and car journeys which broadly boils down to: road travel enabling some phone conversations and some discussion/planning if driving with a colleague; rail travel enabling both of the above as well as more detailed, focused work on a computer. Work demands are thus very likely to dictate what mode people choose.
 - *Personal perspective:* Some people simply prefer to travel in a certain way, and will choose to do so whenever possible. Reasons for this range from personal preference through to their home's proximity to major roads/stations.
 - *Company philosophy:* What do others do on similar journeys? Some companies have formal/informal policies around journey length and mode: on more than one occasion we heard that 2 hours plus was considered to be more of a rail journey than a car journey.
- **Start point/destination:**
 - *Fit with work demands:* Where people need to come from/get to is often intrinsically linked to their work needs. For example – if someone finds themselves in Leeds one morning but needs to get to Bristol that afternoon for a meeting, this leads all other decisions.
 - *Personal perspective:* Flexibility around start/destination can be influenced by where people live, how they get to starting points, their other personal circumstances.
 - *Company philosophy:* Company habits and heuristics are quickly formed. Several respondents talked about how their behaviours differed, for example, around London trips: the city, and its transport network, were often considered a 'special case', and people acted accordingly. This was rarely, if ever, a formal policy.
- **Frequency of travel:**
 - *Fit with work demands:* Those travelling day in day out tend to adopt their own ways of working to ensure they can interweave their work



demands into the demands of travel. The less people travel, the more likely today's priorities are to dictate their decisions.

- *Personal perspective:* As above, people's personal needs often seem embedded into the lives of frequent travellers. Multiple trips in a day can often require a certain amount of personal investment in the process, heightening the importance of this element.
- *Company philosophy:* Again, there are likely to be a range of travel habits that are driven by the most frequent travellers.
- **Time of day:**
 - *Fit with work demands:* This can inform when people choose to travel, as well as what they choose to do when travelling. If office-based work is essential, some travel may be put off until the 'last minute'; some may also choose to travel in their own time if they are travelling overnight anyway.
 - *Personal perspective:* As in other examples, some will have their own preferences about when to travel: avoiding rush hours; avoiding arriving/departing at certain times etc.
 - *Company philosophy:* Most companies tend to have an overall preference for travelling off peak where possible, to save money, though this is very much determined by the immediate work demands.

EMPLOYEES CONTROL THE IMPACT OF TIME SAVINGS

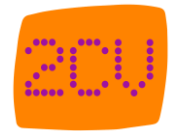
At its simplest, and irrespective of whether we include wellbeing as an element of productivity, the value of time-saving to a business can **theoretically** be summed up with a simple equation:

Less time spent travelling → More time to focus on 'core' work → Greater productivity

While this makes sense in principle, it ignores one crucial element: **how** is the time-saving passed on to the employer?

The answer to this question is not straightforward, as it is not simply a case of employees arriving somewhere faster and thus getting down to work faster. The blurred lines between work and personal time, and the resultant autonomy of many employees, means that employees control whether and how any time savings are passed onto businesses; they are in control of precisely how they use their time.

The most obvious demonstration of this would be a journey back to their starting point which arrives at 4.30pm. Respondents often suggested that mid-afternoon arrivals such as this offered a range of possibilities: 'do I head back to the office or do I go straight home?'



Heading back to the office is often vetoed on grounds of practicality (another half hour to the office offering potential for only half an hour or so of work); heading home is preferable for obvious reasons of relaxation and convenience, alongside more complex trade-offs between a final hour of work on arrival and a 'reward' for a hard day.

Any time savings that might result from improvements to infrastructure are likely to end up with travellers facing much the same decision, albeit even less clear-cut if they are travelling at different times of day or on outbound trips. Regardless of the characteristics of the journey, for a business to realise time savings it needs employees to pass this on: **employees control the impact of time savings.**

The same 'filter system' of work demands, personal perspectives and company philosophy are applied to this decision, requiring answers to the following questions:

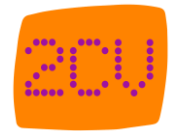
Fit with work demands:

- *What else have they got to do?* If they have work that needs to be completed regardless of when they finish travelling, then they will do this anyway (this ties in with the idea that people aim to make use of whatever time they have available). Whether this is achieved on or off a train, or half an hour sooner or later is largely irrelevant to the business. Obviously, employees who spend less of their own time working will benefit on a personal level, but this benefit is invisible to many businesses.
- *Does their 'time buffer' mitigate against time savings?* Most people build in a 'buffer' of time to meet an appointment: an extended window allowing time for delays at any stage of the journey. The greater this buffer in the first place, the less valuable the time saving.

It is worth noting that expectations and experience will often inform the 'size' of this buffer. This means that **new** time savings may be harder to build into planning at first, and may only be incorporated into plans (and thus passed on) when they are understood, predictable and can be relied upon.

Personal perspective:

- *Are they aware of the time saving in the first place?* Time savings may not necessarily be felt in a tangible way, especially if they are unexpected. If employees don't know they are saving time, they may find it harder to pass it on to their employer. While it is not necessary to be aware of having saved time to pass it on, it seems reasonable to assume that the value of time savings is only clear if this awareness is present.



Company philosophy:

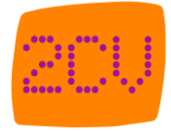
- *How is their time tracked?* Companies which closely monitor the activities of their employees are more likely to require their staff to return to base, or at least check in in some way. One public sector company in the sample used its IT system as a form of 'clocking in' system, and required employees to be logged in for a certain number of hours each week. Staff said they were effectively penalised if they were out of the office too much, and ensured that they logged back in after any journey to avoid this. Some industries, for example one firm of accountants we spoke to, ask staff to register their time in 6 minute blocks, and this has to be allocated to a client project, or potentially general admin / travel. It is perhaps likely that staff in organisations where their time is less rigorously monitored, would potentially find it easier to use time savings for their own purposes, but even where they have to allocate their time quite strictly, it seems unlikely any misallocation of time would get picked up unless it was significantly out of the ordinary. People tend to have an approximate idea of how long a journey will take, and at the approval stage, they tend to just be looking for obvious discrepancies.

The obvious question arising from this is as follows: **is there a threshold at which employees are more likely to pass on time savings to their employer?** While 15 minutes here or there may seem negligible, it may be harder to simply 'absorb' an hour of work time into personal time. People tend to think in terms of blocks of time, and if they arrived home an hour early one day, they would be likely to bear this in mind and try to make up the time later. They tend to have a mental 'balance sheet' of what time they are owed/ have owing and take this into account when deciding how to use their time. There is no hard and fast rule, however, and much of it depends on a huge range of factors such as the seniority of the individual, the type of travel they are undertaking and how their time is being tracked/paid for. What is clear, however, is that the smaller the time saving the less likely that employees feel obliged to pass it on.

Conclusions

As formal rules are not always enforced, employees will often make 'common sense' decisions which are based on norms and a strong sense of accountability. Yet these will ultimately be driven by the work demands that day.

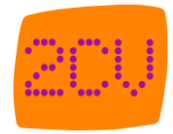
Companies tend to have a system whereby the individual staff make their own travel arrangements, and then line managers / unit heads sign off travel expenses on a case by case basis. How people make a decision around business travel is intrinsically connected to the value that they place on travel time. Travel time is just one aspect of the decision and there is a complex interplay of other factors:



- *The work demands*: the most pressing priorities in order to get the job at hand completed. They are the factors that are most important and relevant to **the business traveller** (as opposed to the business) at the point when they make their travelling decision
- *The contextual*: other factors relating to their personal and work lives. These form the broader background that informs their decision-making. Travel is at heart an emotional, fundamentally human issue and travellers can have personal needs and desires which they aim to meet if at all possible. The extent to which this **personal perspective** dictates decision-making depends to a large degree on the strength of its counterpoint, the **company philosophy** – as outlined in ‘formal’ travel policies and the informal company norms.

The point where personal and company demands meet is, in effect, the point which defines how people arrive at **‘common sense’ decisions**. People make a judgement call based on their own needs and what they know their company will accept; thus we find people making trade-offs between personal comfort and cost to the company or between convenience and stress.

Employees control how time savings are used. Employees control whether and how any time savings are passed onto businesses, because they are in control of precisely how they use their time. The smaller the time saving the less likely that employees feel obliged to pass it on.



E. FACTORS AFFECTING HOW BUSINESSES VALUE TRAVEL TIME

In this final section we explore the different ways in which businesses value time, and how this varies according to the type of business. We also investigate other factors which influence the value that businesses attach to time savings, looking firstly at the characteristics of the business and then the nature of the journeys being made.

THE VALUE OF TIME CHANGES WITHIN AND ACROSS BUSINESSES

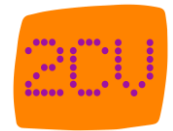
*“Obviously we want to save time. Everyone wants to. Time is money.”
Employer, Small Signage Company, Bristol*

How time is valued within a business will in itself obviously inform the perceived value of time savings. The more valuable time is perceived to be – usually determined by what the person is doing and how it impacts on the business, the more closely it is monitored or the more it is linked directly to ‘productivity’, the more likely businesses are to respond positively to the idea of travel time saving.

Yet there is a distinction between the ‘knee-jerk’, intuitive assumption that time savings are important and knowing precisely why they are important. While the cliché that ‘time is money’ is largely held to be true (and was repeated regularly during the course of this research) businesses often do not seem to have a clear idea how much money it is worth, or what difference it makes. This appears to be true of staff at various levels. In some cases this seemed potentially detrimental; for example some businesses who were spreading the net wider to attract a larger pool of clients did not appear to be building in travel costs, beyond covering fuel consumption.

Much of this relates to **how time is accounted for within a business**. Businesses focusing closely on time were very much a minority in this sample, with most businesses adopting a broad-brush approach that focused on ‘getting the job done’ i.e. people have an idea of what each member of staff should be expected to achieve in the time available, and as long as this is done, they are less concerned about exactly when and where the work is conducted. Those businesses adopting a more rigorous approach did so using a variety of methods:

- Timesheets (e.g. accountants)
- Charging their rates by the hour (e.g. surveyors)
- Clocking in and out (e.g. local government)
- Strictly timetabled days (e.g. estate agents)



The more a business, or a department within a business, focuses on time, the better an understanding of its value to the business. This can be seen most clearly in those businesses where time can be translated almost directly to money; sales is a good example.

It's unclear how much difference this kind of monitoring makes to perceptions of time, though it is clear that it does help organisations attribute a clear monetary value to time. Given that travel is only one element of their days, and by extension the time they track, the distinction between travel time and 'other' time is not always made.

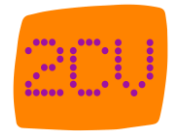
Who pays for the time is also important. Certain professional services, such as accountancy, charge their time back to the client directly. They often charge the same whether or not they are conducting their core business, so an accountant driving to an appointment may cost as much as an accountant advising his client. The fact that clients are paying for the time has a two-way effect: on the one hand time becomes more valuable because they are aware that each hour is in service to the client. This may encourage them to pay for more expensive options if it means they can arrive at a destination more quickly. Yet because the client is paying, employees can be less inclined to worry about slow travel as it is not **their** business that is losing out.

For businesses where time and effort are all wrapped up in the provision of a product or service, it is less confusing: the less time spent on delivering one 'item', the better the margin and the more time for delivering the next.

Another issue informing the value of time within a business is the **value of the task at hand**: the income generated by whatever activity requires the travel. In some cases this is a simple equation and is quite clear cut: a high value client, a high-profile job or a critical meeting will all make the time involved – most noticeably in delivering the work, but also in preparing for and travelling to meetings etc., feel far more valuable than that spent on projects with low profit margins or that will make little difference to the company's future.

Yet there are intangible values that are harder to define, yet are still acted upon. These could be those elements of the business' work which involve laying the foundations for future work, or those which revolve around client relationships. This is the point at which companies may find working for 'old faithful' clients less valuable than winning exciting, new clients.

Finally, one of the biggest drivers of different levels of perceived value within businesses is that of **seniority**. While it is rarely stated quite so baldly, the value of an individual's time is ultimately linked to their role. The more senior an individual, the more their salary, the more in demand they are, the greater the opportunity cost of having them travel and thus the more valuable their time is perceived to be, and also of course, the greater importance and value of their attending a meeting.



There is typically an assumption that companies will always pay to save the time of their most senior people. This is arguably more the case within larger employers where company structures and hierarchies are more obvious and likely to have more impact on individuals (senior people in smaller businesses are more likely to ‘muck in’ with their employees so the difference can be less visible).

As more senior people are far more conscious of their value to the company, they are more confident in decisions which may involve spending more money to ensure a faster, more convenient or more comfortable journey. So the more senior travellers are, the more likely their time is to be valued simply because they are in control of how that value is recognised.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BUSINESS

Role of travel in the business often plays a part

How critical travel is for the business has a major influence on the implications of reduced travel time:

- Where travel is **intrinsic** to the business, an essential function of what they do, travel time can be a huge factor. Put simply, if travel is woven into the fabric of the business, then the phrase ‘time is money’ can be literal.

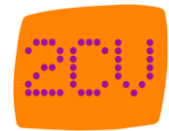
Here, any reduction in travel time can be tied directly to their profit and thus there is a clear calculation that can be made as to whether it is worth paying additional money to save time, because they will then make money on another project. A business of chartered surveyors based in London charge their clients by the hour, and therefore see making efficient use of travel time as a primary issue for their business.

“We charge quite a lot by the hour and so if I waste time travelling, I’m wasting my revenue. This goes for the rest of the team as well and I make sure they know it.”

Employer, Small Surveyor, London

- When travel is a **contributory** factor (i.e. it is part of what they do, such as in client liaison, but does not necessarily fuel the core business) there is not quite such a distinct link between time savings and a benefit to the business. Other jobs within the business – for example, face to face sales – may be more intrinsic, even though they are not the core business.

That said, there may still be a tangible link between travel time and success, so travel time is often important. For example, if the time saving means that more client meetings are possible, the value to the business is in the satisfaction generated, the



reputational impact and, potentially, the additional sales generated.

“If I could cut down travel by an hour each day it means I could spend an hour here in the office making calls and tracking down new clients.”

Employer, Medium Estate Agents, Bristol

- Where travel has a more **indirect** impact, travel is, for obvious reasons, less of a focus.

If only certain individuals travel or where travel is only occasionally required, the implications of reduced travel time will be assessed on a case by case basis. This is likely to be a more subjective decision, taking into account the factors outlined in the model at possibly a more conscious level.

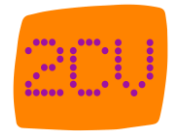
This can extend to types of travel too. A large estate agent in the sample relied greatly on local travel but only sent people on trips longer than a half hour or so on the odd occasion when they needed to go to seminars/conferences. These long, nationwide journeys were seen as completely different to the day to day travel and the benefits to the business were often considered in detail before it was OKed. Yet, once the trip was agreed, the travel time was largely seen as irrelevant: once they were away from the office, they were away from the office and the details were of interest solely to the traveller.

In addition to and related to the above, the regularity of travel can also play a part:

- **Routine Travel**, i.e. daily travel. Both employers and employees see potential to make significant cumulative time savings in quicker journey times for the trips they take most regularly.
- **Repeat travel**, i.e. a journey (or type of journey) that is regularly repeated on a weekly/monthly basis. As above, the cumulative benefits are obvious and thought to be important over time.
- **Occasional travel**, i.e. infrequently visited destinations; infrequent travellers. Time savings seem less important, in part because one-off, or unfamiliar, journeys inevitably involve a larger time ‘buffer’ to ensure that travellers can overcome any unforeseen difficulties.

Client-driven travel can feel more valuable

Many businesses, from professional services through to manual trades travel to meet clients, and are often entirely reactive essentially, at their beck and call for when their client needs them. For these businesses, travel time is critical as it dictates their level of flexibility, their ability to meet client demands and thus their overall level of responsiveness. Time can



thus relate directly to client perception and satisfaction. In these situations it can become entirely justifiable to pay extra for a faster journey.

Much of the value of time saving depends on the **nature of the meeting**. If it is a particularly important meeting, then it becomes more justifiable to pay more for travel to ensure they arrive in good time, refreshed and well prepared. They would also be more likely to leave earlier to give them a greater 'buffer' to allow for things going wrong and impacting on their journey. This can be a particular issue when using public transport, especially when there are a number of legs to the journey, as contingency time needs to be allowed for each of these.

There is an interesting trade-off here with reliability. A faster journey would mean they could reduce the amount of time they need to allow as a buffer to ensure they get there on time, but if there was the option of greater reliability, then this could be more important as it means they could make their travel decisions with greater certainty. This is ultimately about control: travellers don't have control over rail timetables or the state of the roads; this sense of being at the mercy of the modes means that that they exert control in the only possible way to ensure that their appointments are met.

This has implications for choices between different modes of travel too (as outlined later in this section). This view can be found across types of business and personnel, however was explained most explicitly by a management trainer, who travels daily:

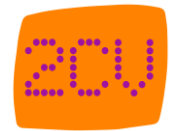
"Greater reliability would mean more confidence and reassurance when travelling. On balance the different modes are fairly even when it comes to reliability – on road you're guaranteed some traffic, trains can be hit and miss. There's a distinction though, with a train the cost of delay is much bigger, you might miss your connection and be 2 hours late, that's half a day of business wasted."

CEO/Trainer, Large Management Training, Manchester

While most people feel at the 'mercy' of the various modes, different businesses have different attitudes to how to offset potential unreliability.

Time 'buffers' are driven by perceptions of reliability

For some businesses, being late is not an option: they build in a large 'buffer' to avoid any chance of being late; time savings are, to some extent, less important as they will not be realised in any practical way. One company in the sample is an events filming company, and for them, getting there at the right time is fundamental to their business, so they need to build in a massive amount of buffer time. Being late is not an option, so the buffer is huge and often lasts overnight. Other businesses, including estate agents and printers, spoke of



how time-critical their travelling sometimes was and the need to include sufficient time to ensure that the most important appointments do not slip.

Faster journeys would, for these companies, mean they have more free time at the venue and time to catch up on other tasks, which while useful is not essential. If the faster journeys proved to be more reliable, though, then they could start to reduce the amount of buffer time they need.

“If trains were more reliable, say you had a guarantee you would be there at a certain time, it would save me from getting the early train. To me that’s more important than a quicker journey.”

Sole Trader, Management Consultancy, London

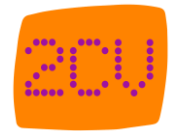
For others, they take precautions not to be late, but accept that sometimes this will happen; for them travel time savings can be more important, as they are more likely to benefit. One respondent, whose business relied on travelling across country to craft markets, needed to arrive in time for the start of the fair, but could afford to cut things quite fine, as the consequences of being late were relatively minimal. They are unlikely to lose out on much business at the start of the day, and being slightly late would only be a problem if it happened consistently enough to come to the attention of the market owners, who might then decide to get in a new supplier. Paying more for a faster journey is then unlikely to be business critical, but would then be dependent on whether it made more sense to them from the perspective of how the journey fits into the rest of their day and impacts on their personal time. Examples on larger scales were seen across the sample.

Briefcase vs. ‘toolkit’ travel

Non-‘briefcase travel’ within the business can also inform attitudes to briefcase travel, especially in businesses where the distinction is blurred. This blurring is often apparent where there is a manual/trade/delivery element of the business (‘toolkit travel’), which is supported by the briefcase travel to some degree.

For example, a firm of glaziers we spoke to would make regular sales and client visits, as well as post-sales site visits for foremen to assess the site. The same people would later travel with a larger team to conduct the work itself. Given that the same people were often travelling, but alternating between briefcase and ‘toolkit’ travellers, they often found it hard to distinguish between the two.

What this means in practical terms is that the approach to one form of travel will leech into the approach to the other. Thus they may still travel huge distances in a van for a briefcase visit, just because that’s how they travel for a ‘toolkit’ visit. This, combined with the ever-broadening breadth of travel many such companies are conducting, means that travel time, while valued, is less of a focus than ‘getting the job done’.



Role of traveller

As discussed earlier, the traveller's role and seniority has an impact on perceptions of travel time. Precisely who is travelling informs the value of saved time in a number of ways:

- **The opportunity cost of travelling:** what would they be doing if they weren't travelling? Could they be generating new business for the company? What could they be usefully doing if they were back in the office?
- This ties in with **the impact their absence has on the office:** what are the knock-on effects of this individual being out of the office? Some staff are employed to be away from the office a lot, so if they are out slightly longer, it is unlikely to have a significant impact on the office itself. However, if it is someone who is usually office-based, their absence could potentially cause problems, with decisions not being made and potentially hold-ups being caused in the functioning of the office. The knock-on effects of being out of the office travelling means that other people have to fill in roles, catch up with other work, do what needs to be done. This is especially true for small businesses where even less senior individuals can be vital in terms of keeping the business running.

"We have quite a small team, so if someone is out of the office travelling for work, then other people in the office may need to pick up tasks they can't do."

Travel-booker, Small Sign Maker, Bristol

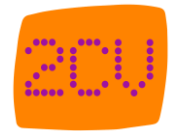
- **What they achieve while travelling:** will they work en route? Is this a time to achieve certain desk-based chores or an opportunity to relax? More senior people are better set up to work on the go, which often means they are a better choice than someone whose work effectively stops when they leave the office.

Travel projects an image

Most businesses are concerned about how they look to clients and the way they arrive represents the company. This means it is important that the time travelling does not affect their confidence/presentation/image they want to project. For example, being 15 minutes early projects an image of being in control and ordered; arriving in a car may look more professional. A sole-trader/ financial consultant based in London discussed how he often takes meetings with very senior level staff and needs to arrive extra early, in order to make a good first impression.

"I need to be in a good head space – ready to impress – at a client meeting. Arriving frazzled can lead to a less productive meeting in my experience."

Employer, Small Financial Consultancy, London



“When I’m travelling to meet clients, everything for me is about image, I need to turn up with time to spare, ready, prepared, ideally by car, showing I’m successful, in control, trustworthy...”

Employer, Small Tyre Sales, Nottingham

Travel purpose

The purpose of the journey can have a big impact on perceptions of the value of the time it takes and thus time saved. Journey purpose can be broadly split into 3 categories:

- **Operational:** doing the job the business makes its money from
- **Management:** travelling for purposes that support that core business, be it sales, client relations, aftercare, support etc.
- **Ad hoc:** additional travel for other reasons outside the normal sphere of work, such as conferences, seminars etc.

Each of these will present a different set of expectations of that journey, demands on the traveller in terms of what they need to achieve before, after and during the journey and attitude to the travel itself. Certainly journeys for service delivery and management are of greater importance and are more fundamental to the business. Ad hoc journeys for seminars etc. are likely to be given a lower priority.

One company had started paying a standard flat rate for junior staff attending training seminars (Large, South, Veterinary group). This did not necessarily cover the cost of the journey – it was more of a contribution to their travel costs, as the seminars themselves were viewed as being a benefit to them personally. Another company tried to organise travel to such training events centrally, to make sure that travel costs are kept down.

“When they go to seminars we try to get them to go in a group by car so that you’re not paying for a number of train tickets.”

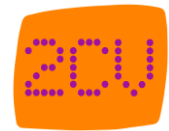
Middle Manager, Medium Professional Services, Wales

JOURNEY CHARACTERISTICS

There are a number of journey characteristics that also impact on perceptions of the value of time.

Length of journey

Perceptions of travel time revolve around the time saving being a **tangible amount**, whether or not the time is something that people feel they can do something with. A few minutes here or there is unlikely to seem worth paying extra for, but if there is a decent chunk of



time or people feel they could complete an extra task as a result, then it becomes more valuable.

The time saved as a proportion of the overall time is also important. Saving 10 minutes over a very long journey can seem of little value, as this may get consumed by the notional buffer time that people allow in their minds in case of problems on the journey. Saving 10 minutes on a half hour journey is altogether different, especially if it's a journey that people might be doing several times a day. Thus people have a feel for, if not a robust articulation of, what constitutes a valuable time saving. This was an issue that was occasionally raised during the stated preference exercise to explain why people might not try and seek shorter travel savings.

The length of journey also influences modal choice. For many, longer journeys of several hours seem more appropriate by train. It gives people the chance to get some work done and to relax, whereas driving would be very tiring. Moreover, a long car journey brings with it lots of opportunities for delays and problems. There's an opportunity cost: the longer the journey, the more chance that for example, in taking a train, you could do something useful with your time.

"I prefer to take the train over longer distances, allows you to get a bit more work done, especially if it's more than two or three hours."

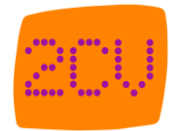
Employee, Large Education Provider, London

Starting point/ destination

The starting point for people's journeys can also impact on their decisions about mode and the value they attach to saving time. Depending where people are starting from, not all modes are on an equal footing. If the office is a 20 minute walk or an inconvenient bus ride from the nearest station, then the car becomes more attractive, even if it might take longer over the whole journey. Saving time on one element of a journey by public transport e.g. the train, would have less value than saving time on a car journey.

With regard to destinations, Central London in particular is a special case, because here the public transport provision is so good that people feel they can easily use public transport, as they can just turn up and go. For many this is actually preferable to using their car where there might be a lot of uncertainty and additional costs for parking and the congestion charge etc., not to mention the prospect of increased traffic. This seemed to be the case for both businesses based in London and those visiting it.

"When I go to London – unless I'm doing a trade show and need my big display, I'll go by coach instead of driving. I don't mind driving in London but it's a long way, parking is difficult and expensive, and it's easy just to



get the Tube.”

Sole trader, Jewellery, Wales

“If we’re going to a meeting in town (London) we’ll just go by tube. The station is just down the road and you can be in the centre in 20 minutes – it’s often more difficult to go by car as you get stuck in traffic.”

Employee, Large Veterinary Group, London

Time of day

The time of day can also have an impact on the mode selected and the amount of contingency time allowed for the journey. When using public transport, peak travel is more expensive and likely to be more crowded, impacting on the ability to do any work and the state of the traveller when they arrive at their destination. For car drivers, the journey is likely to take longer, with the potential for significant delays if traffic is very heavy.

Mode

Finally, the various modes of transport have different strengths and weaknesses associated with them, and these impact on how valuable gaining additional time might be on a journey using that mode.

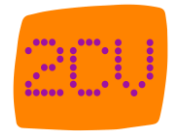
The main benefit of **cars** is their flexibility – the freedom they give to the driver. In comparison with using public transport, the traveller is in control of their journey and can be more flexible, reacting to any changes to their plans. There is sometimes a natural bias towards using the car – especially for unfamiliar trips – as it is simpler. Using public transport introduces a series of unknowns and problems that need to be solved – which train to catch; what are the connections; how can I get to my destination at the other end? This takes time and energy to sort out, and often involves introducing additional time into each leg of the journey to allow for problems. This can then add up to potentially having quite a lot of ‘dead time’ for the journey.

“We tend to go by car. You can go door to door and you’re not constrained by having to get a train at a certain time. It’s also just a lot less hassle, and a lot less to worry about. It’s 20 minutes into the city centre here to get to the station, and at the other end you then need to work out which bus to get or hope there’s a taxi.”

Employee, Small Professional Services, Wales

“The Area Managers have got company cars so we expect them to use those whenever possible as they’re already paid for.”

Employer, Large Veterinary Practice, London



“We spend a lot of our time at client offices. It’s difficult to know how long you need to be there, and if you go by car you have the flexibility to stay a bit late one evening to finish off, which might then mean you don’t need to go in the next day.”

Employee, Small Professional services, Wales

Cars are also more appropriate when:

- More than one member of staff needs to travel
- You need to carry heavy bags / supplies / products / equipment / files

They also give staff the opportunity to relax on the journey in their own personal space – in comfort, listening to music or the radio. If they need to make phone calls, this can be done whilst driving with a hands-free kit and is more private and confidential than finding a quiet space to do so on public transport. Finally, some people also simply enjoy driving, which is perhaps especially the case amongst younger men.

When travelling by public transport, **taxis** are more likely to be justifiable when travelling for work than when travelling for leisure. They help to provide greater reliability and are usually quicker than taking for example buses to their final destination.

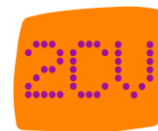
The main advantage of **rail** is that it holds the possibility of using the journey time for something else – you do not need to concentrate on driving. Thus staff are able to get some work done, or to relax and have some leisure time, or possibly use the time to catch up on sleep.

“There are two measures of flexibility to consider. Driving gives you that door to door flexibility but is less flexible in terms of productivity. So for longer journeys I prefer to let the train or plane take the strain, so I can get a bit of work done.”

Employer, Micro training, Manchester

The main downsides of trains are felt to be:

- Being tied to a timetable
- The cost – especially if you cannot book far in advance, or if several people need to make the journey
- Their reliability – potentially being delayed / cancelled or missing the train/ a connection
- What to do once you arrive – getting to your destination is potentially problematic – knowing where you need to get to and how best to get there introduces another set of logistics to work out, and contingencies to plan for



- Needing to build in additional 'buffer' time to allow for any problems on each of the journey legs
- The environment: it is not certain that you will be able to get any work done or indeed relax on the train. You might not be able to get a seat; it might be too crowded to work properly; you might not have access to electricity or Wi-Fi to enable mobile working.

TRAVELLER CHARACTERISTICS

Given that ultimately it is the traveller themselves who controls much of the decision-making around travel, it is important to remember the obvious point that differences among travellers will also influence the decisions they make, the way they value time and how time savings are valued.

Key issues to consider:

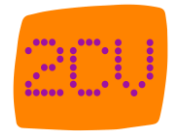
- The impact of travel on them: travel will obviously affect people differently depending on who they are, where they live, how they feel about travel and the other things going on in their life. This clearly informs the personal perspective, discussed at length earlier; yet it is worth remembering that what the travel means to them will often influence the decisions they make.
- Their wellbeing: how people feel, and how they expect to feel, will often influence decisions. Snap decisions will often be made based on how they feel in the moment; people's perceptions of a schedule on their wellbeing will equally inform the decisions they take.
- How much they travel: the more people travel, the more used to it they might become or, conversely, the wearier or more intolerant of discomfort or delay they might become. Again, this is highly subjective but may well inform the decisions what they choose to do.

Conclusions

Employers are likely to benefit from and value cumulative time savings but employees are more likely to value significant individual time savings

There are a number of additional factors that influence the perceived value of time savings, and these can be categorised according to whether they relate to the nature of the business itself, or the journey being planned.

With regard to the characteristics of the businesses themselves:

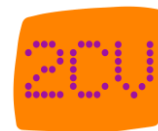


- The **role of travel** plays a role – where travel is an intrinsic part of what the business provides, saving travel time can be hugely important.
- Similarly, the purpose of the journey influences these perceptions – where the journey is to help actually deliver the service or manage the client, time savings are likely to be valued more highly than where the journey is not mission critical. Client driven travel can feel more valuable as these journeys are generally of greater importance and time saved can be critical in ensuring a responsive service for customers.
- Who is travelling is important. The value of the time savings will depend on: the opportunity cost of the member of staff being on the journey instead of in their normal role; the impact their absence might have on the office and other members of staff, and traded off against what the member of staff can achieve whilst they are travelling.

Also important are the characteristics of the journey, chiefly:

- The length of journey: perceptions of the value of travel time revolve around the time saving being a tangible amount, whether or not the time is something that people feel they can do something with. A few minutes here or there is unlikely to seem worth paying extra for, but if there is a decent chunk of time or people feel they could complete an extra task as a result, then it becomes more valuable.
- The time saved as a proportion of the overall time is also important. Saving 10 minutes over a very long journey can seem of little value, yet saving 10 minutes on a half hour journey is altogether different, especially if it's a journey that people might be doing several times a day. Thus people have a feel for, if not a robust articulation of, what constitutes a valuable time saving.

Finally, **the mode used influences perceptions of value**. The main benefit of using a car is flexibility - the freedom it gives the driver. In comparison with using public transport, the traveller is in control of their journey and can be more flexible, reacting to any changes to their plans, although it can be tiring and severely limits what can be achieved during the journey. Rail on the other hand, holds the possibility of using the journey time for something else. Thus staff are able to get some work done, or to relax and have some leisure time, or possibly use the time to catch up on sleep. However, they are then tied to a timetable, and at the mercy of the train potentially being delayed / cancelled or missing the train/ a connection.



Appendix

Case studies of participating businesses

